PRIVATE CONFESSION IN AMERICAN LUTHERANISM

A Study of Doctrine, History, and Practice.

by

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Knut M. Enger

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INTRODUCTION

A. The Task.

In our time the Protestant churches are probably putting more effort and work into the task of helping man than ever before. Divinity students are trained in seminaries in theology as they have always been, but in addition much stress is put on psychology, clinical training, understanding of personality, counseling, and other related subjects. Hundreds of books have been written since the last World War on the same topics. The intention of training and writing is to enable the future pastors, as well as the present ones, to do a better job in their ministry. In this respect the United States has taken the lead.

As all churches, the Lutheran church is concerned with the whole man as a psycho-somatic being. Thus Lutheranism can never disregard psychological and social aspects as being of small importance. However, at least from a Lutheran perspective, the main task of the church is the same as always: Reconcile man to God by proclaiming the Gospel. This is done in preaching, in teaching and instruction, in studying the Word of God, in practicing Christian fellowship, in counseling, in using the Sacraments, in worshipping together, and in sharing other acts of the church. The means differ, but the very center of it is man's admittance of being a sinner, and his acceptance of God's forgiveness. This is in essence the Lutheran concept of confession of sins and absolution.

One may distinguish between six different forms of confession[1]:

(1) Public Confession - confession of sins by the whole congregation in connection with a service, followed by the minister's declared absolution on behalf of God. This form is sometimes called General Confession.[2]

(2) An individual's confession of sins in public - confession of sins by a member before the entire congregation or a portion of it.

(3) Confession of sins to God alone.

(4) Confession of sins by a person to another person whom he has offended.

(5) An individual's confession of sins while being counseled without formal absolution.

(6) Private Confession - confession of sins by one man to another (usually a pastor) followed by the other's declared absolution on behalf of God.[3]

Private Confession, the last of these, is the concern of this dissertation.

A few years ago three Lutheran bishops from three different countries made remarks about Private Confession, which, for all of them was a great concern: ". . . it is safe to say that nothing of our Lutheran inheritance, has been as neglected as Private Confession"[1]; "Private Confession is . . . a forgotten means of grace"[2]; ". . . if Luther could speak to our time, he would accuse us of having offended God's honor, because we are indifferent to his gifts."[3] The same concern forced a pastor in the Eastern United States to write fifty years ago: "This undervaluing of so important a service is a direct undervaluing of our Lutheran Reformation."[4] Quite recently another pastor in the West asked a question along the same line: "Is private confession necessary?" and his answer was yes.[5] Assuming that the statements are valid, Lutheranism has almost lost one of the most effective means in pastoral care. Consequently the immediate question is raised: Is a revival possible? The author, who shares the views expressed above, is convinced that a revival can take place if the Lutheran churches make the necessary effort. First, one has to consider what Private Confession is in the Lutheran sense of the term. Next, the history of Private Confession in Lutheranism ought to be traced. By doing so, at least part of the answer can be found as to why Private Confession has almost disappeared. Further, the actual practice and opinion of Private Confession in Lutheranism at the present time have to be studied. The author will follow this approach, hoping that the conclusions will give some answers as to how and where a revival of Private Confession can begin.

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[1] Wolfgang Boehme, Beichtlehre für Evangelische Christen (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1956), pp. 15ff.

[2] Whenever the terms "Public Confession" and "General Confession" are capitalized in the dissertation, it is indicated that confession of sins is followed by the minister's declared absolution.

[3] The term "Private Confession" is capitalized in the dissertation whenever the meaning is that a person's confession of sins is followed by the confessor's declared absolution.

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[1] Kaare Stoylen, "Trekk til belysning av skriftemaalets historie," Norsk Teologisk Tidsskrift, XLIV (1943), p. 1.

[2] Bo Giertz, Kristi Kyrka (Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelsens Forlag, 1939), p. 163.

[3] Stoylen, op. cit., quoting Fuglsang-Damgaard.

[4] Memoirs of the Lutheran Liturgical Association, VI (1906), 65.

[5] Erich Heintzen, "Is private confession necessary?," The Lutheran Witness, LXXX (1961), No. 20, pp. 8ff.

American Lutheranism has been chosen as the special universe of study. This choice has been made partly because the author is staying in this country; mainly because one feels that Lutheran churches in the United States have contributions to offer each other as well as to Lutheranism as a whole in the field of pastoral care.

B. History of Research.

Since the Reformation few books have been written about Private Confession in Lutheranism. In the middle of the last century three German works appeared. Steitz[1] was mainly concerned with the liturgy and formula of confession; Pfisterer[2] discussed the difference between Lutheran Private Confession and Roman Catholic Auricular Confession,[3] and Kliefoth[4] took an historical approach.[1] Some of these thoughts were presented a few years later in Sweden by C. G. Essen.[2]

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[1] Georg Eduard Steitz, Die Privatbeichte und Privatabsolution der luth. Kirche, aus den Quellen des 16. Jahs. (Frankfurt a.M., 1854).

[2] Gust. Fr. Pfisterer, Luthers Lehre von der Beichte (Stuttgart, 1857).

[3] The main difference is that Private Confession is not to be regarded as a sacrament.

[4] Th. Kliefoth, Die Beichte und Absolution (Schwerin, 1856).

By the turn of the century another four books or extensive articles were published in Germany, by Herrmann,[3] Lipsius,[4] Hardeland,[5] and Fischer.[6] None of them, however, brought forward valuable aspects in addition to those presented previously. Thirty years went by before Klaus Harms wrote a book about confession in connection with preparation for the Lord's Supper.[7] Harms feels that there is a duplicity (Doppelheit) in binding together absolution and Holy Communion, because God's forgiveness is offered both places. He asks if it has always been so, and gives the answer in the negative after having discussed Luther and his development. He shows what happened to the practice of Private and Public Confession, and is quite opposed to the idea that Private Confession should be nearly compulsory before Holy Communion. Private Confession has value in itself without being connected with the Lord's Supper.[1] One should rather have special Holy Communion services in which Public Confession is practiced.[2]

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[1] The book, having 512 compact pages, has five parts: The Period of the N.T.; That of the Ancient Church to St. Augustine; From Augustine to the Reformation; The Period of the Reformation; The Modern Period, beginning with Spener. A very short summary of the book can be found in an article written by James F. Lambert, "The Liturgical History of Confession and Absolution," Memoirs of the Lutheran Liturgical Association, VI (1906), 65-75.

[2] C. G. von Essen, Om bikt och avlösning (Stockholm, 1867).

[3] Wilhelm Herrmann, Die Busse des ev. Christen (1891). His book first appeared as an article in Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche, XXI (1891), 28-81. Herrmann is especially concerned with the relationship of confession and Holy Communion.

[4] R. A. Lipsius, Luthers Lehre von der Busse (Braunschweig, 1892). This book was also first written as a long article in Jahrbuch für Protestantischen Theologie, XVIII (1892). Lipsius discusses mainly the dogmatic aspects of confession, maintaining that there is first a "poenitentia legalis, darnach auch die poenitentia evangelica" (p. 340).

[5] Aug. Hardeland, Geschichte der speciellen Seelsorge (1898).

[6] E. Fischer, Zur Geschichte der evangelischen Beichte, I, II (1902-03). Appeared first as articles in Studien zur Geschichte der Theologie und Kirche, VIII (1902), and IX (1903).

[7] Klaus Harms, Die Gottesdienstliche Beichte als Abendmahlsvorbereitung (Greifwald: Bamberg Verlag, 1930).

Harms' book indicated a renewed interest in Private Confession. This was expressed in a Danish book by Fuglsang-Damgaard in 1933.[3] During the last fifteen years only three new books have appeared, two published in Sweden and one in Germany. In the field of psychology of religion, Erik Berggren published a most valuable book in 1946 about psychology of Christian penance.[4] By no means is he concerned only with Lutheran practice, but this is included. In 1952 Erich Roth presented his study about Private Confession and the Office of the Keys in the Theology of the Reformers,[5] maintaining that Luther understood Private Confession to be a sacrament.[6]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 145ff.

[2] Ibid., pp. 149-158.

[3] H. Fuglsang-Damgaard, Privatskriftemaalets fornyelse (Copenhagen, 1933).

[4] Erik Berggren, Till den Kristna Biktens Psychologi (Stockholm: Bonniers Förlag, 1946).

[5] Erich Roth, Die Privatbeichte und Schlüsselgewalt in der Theologie der Reformatoren (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Verlag, 1952).

[6] Cf. infra, pp. 93f.

Finally Bertil Lindberg's book about penance came in 1959.[1] The latter is a theological study in which he compares the Roman-Catholic and Evangelical-Lutheran understanding of penance.[2]

In addition to the books mentioned above,[3] Private Confession is briefly discussed in most major dogmatic works of European Lutheranism, and furthermore there are a number of articles written about it in periodicals and other publications.[4] The practice of Private Confession is also mentioned in most church historical works.

However, if we compare what is written about Private Confession with the amount of writing about other theological subjects, it has to be maintained that Private Confession is almost neglected. The complete history of Private Confession in European Lutheranism still has to be written, and what is discussed about Lutheran understanding of Private Confession does not seem to take all confessional statements as well as Luther's sayings into consideration. A re-study is necessary because this is the only platform upon which any Lutheran understanding of Private Confession can be built.

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[1] Bertil Lindberg, Om Bikten (Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelsens Bokförlag, 1959).

[2] Lindberg is frequently referred to in the Introduction and Part I of this dissertation.

[3] There may be other books published about Private Confession than the books mentioned above. If so, they are unknown to the author.

[4] The articles found are listed in the Bibliography which does not claim to be exhaustive. However, they represent what is written about Private Confession in more than 250 volumes of Lutheran periodicals, each containing between five and six hundred pages. About seventy volumes are German periodicals, about sixty Scandinavian, and the rest American. These volumes, each of which contains several annual issues of periodicals, can be found in the Speer Library, Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, N. J.

In the United States no books are found to be written about Private Confession in Lutheranism, neither about the understanding of it nor about practice in the past and present times. One could assume that this fact shows lack of interest, but the opposite is rather the case. There are articles written in periodicals and other literature,[1] and the proof of widespread interest is found in the response to a research project presented in the third part of this dissertation.

C. Background for the Lutheran View of Private Confession.

The Lutheran reformers never intended to create a new church. They felt that the existing Roman Catholic Church had brought many un-Biblical ideas into doctrines and practices. Now the Church had to be reformed, building upon the Bible first of all, but secondly upon church traditions which were not in conflict with the Scriptures. Thus one cannot avoid searching for a possible Biblical background for Private Confession, and certainly one must trace the historical development of Private Confession to see if Lutheran understanding has its roots in the past.

1. Biblical Background.

(a) The Old Testament.

The religion of the Old Testament was a religion of law in which sin, guilt, and atonement played an important part.

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[1] Cf. Bibliography.

When the single man or the people as a whole had sinned, the wrath of Jahve was against them. To be reconciled, the sin had to be expiated.

On the one hand, Jahve is a God of grace "showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me."[1] On the other hand he does punish the sinner. ". . . (he) will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children . . . ."[2] He is so rigid that the guilty may even die.[3]

Usually Jahve's wrath can be satisfied in other ways. Prayers are important; Moses and the prophets often prayed for their people.[4] Ransoms for offences were paid on certain occasions,[5] but the main means of atonement was the offering. Especially the book of Leviticus speaks of "sin offerings" used after trespassing against specific laws and commands.[6] After these offerings Jahve was reconciled, and the sins forgiven. "Burnt offerings" play an even larger role in reconciliation, and this was used as an offering for guilt after having trespassed Jahve's rights.[7]

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[1] Exodus 20:6. Cf. also Daniel 9:4; Numbers 14:18; Exodus 32:12; Joshua 7:9; I Samuel 12:22.

[2] Exodus 34:7.

[3] Cf. Exodus 21:12, 17, 29; II Samuel 21.

[4] Cf. Exodus 32:30ff.; Numbers 11:1; 14:1-20; 21:5ff.; I Samuel 7:2; 12:19; Genesis 18:16-33.

[5] Cf. Exodus 31:30; 30:12; Amos 5:12.

[6] Cf. Leviticus 4; 5:1-6; 6:17-23; 10:16-20; Chaps. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15. Also Ezekiel 40:39; 43:17-20.

[7] Cf. Leviticus 5:21ff.; 7:7; Numbers 6:12; 18:9; Ezekiel 40:39; 42:13; 44:29; 46:20.

There are differing opinions as to how offerings could reconcile Jahve, however this is of less importance in our discussion. We have shown only that there are many forms of obtaining the forgiveness of sins. Another aspect is of more importance: The acts in themselves were not sufficient. Prior to and in connection with any act, an inner repentance and conversion became essential. Perhaps this aspect was not clear in earlier history, but as time passed it became evident. "The whole tendency of the prophetic revelation and of the Psalmist's spiritual consciousness is to emphasize the necessity of a change of heart."[1] This change of heart should not only be caused by guilt and fear of God's wrath, but equally from the belief that God is merciful and takes away sin.[2] The Rabbis in late Judaism stressed this view. They demanded public repentance, in addition to the teachings concerning individual and inward penitence.[3] Historical scholars have called attention to the practice of confession of personal sins in late pre-Christian Judaism,[4] but it does not seem to have been common practice.

The Old Testament teaches about forgiveness and some means by which this forgiveness may be obtained. However, even if one finds expressions not unfamiliar with the concepts of Private Confession, there are no statements which exclusively point to it.

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[1] New S. H., VIII, 445. Cf. Psalms 51:16-17; Joel 2:13.

[2] Isaiah 44:22; Psalms 51:10.

[3] John T. McNeill, A History of the Cure of Souls (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951), p. 15.

[4] S. Schlechter, Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology (New York, 1920), citing McNeill, op. cit., p. 15.

(b) The New Testament.

With the coming of Christ the remission of sins takes on an entirely new dimension. Christ made atonement for sins, and outward offerings are not necessary in the New Testament sense of forgiveness.[1]

Confession of sins is mentioned a few times. Mark and Matthew tell of how people who went to see John the Baptist "confessed their sins."[2] Peter once fell down and said: "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."[3] The prodigal son returned to his father with this confession on his lips: "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son . . . ."[4] A publican was standing in the Lord's temple, smiting his breast, saying: "God be merciful to me a sinner."[5] James writes, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed."[6] John states in one of his letters: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."[7]

Forgiveness is frequently found in the entire New Testament, and is one of the central terms. In praying to God, we are taught to say, "Forgive us our trespasses";[1] in healing the paralyzed man,[2] and in comforting the sinful woman,[3] Jesus says: "Thy sins are forgiven"; the greatness of God's forgiveness is expressed by him in a parable about the lord who forgave his servant a large debt, and this same servant could not forgive a small debt.[4]

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[1] Cf. Chap. II, B.

[2] Mark 1:5; Matthew 3:6.

[3] Luke 5:8.

[4] Luke 15:18-19.

[5] Luke 18:13.

[6] James 5:16.

[7] I John 1:9.

The work of Jesus is always the foundation for the apostolic proclamation of forgiveness of sins. At Pentecost Peter says: "Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins";[5] and to the Jewish council he witnesses about Christ: "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."[6] Peter connected this with the Old Testament by saying: "To him Jesus give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."[7]

Paul states the theological view in his sermon at Perga: ". . . through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."[8]

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[1] Matthew 6:12.

[2] Matthew 9:2; Mark 2:5; Luke 5:20.

[3] Luke 7:47f.

[4] Matthew 18:21-35.

[5] Acts 2:38.

[6] Acts 5:31.

[7] Acts 10:43.

[8] Acts 13:38f.

His call as an apostle is to proclaim God's forgiveness, and he tells King Agrippa that the Lord sent him to the Gentiles commissioning him: "To open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light . . . so that they may receive forgiveness of sins. . . ."[1] In his epistles, Paul stresses the point several times: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins";[2] "And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you";[3] "in whom Jesus we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins";[4] "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses."[5]

(c) Within the Church there is general agreement concerning the central place of confession and absolution, i.e., confession of sins to God and his forgiveness. However, disagreement exists as to what extent, if any, these sayings and others apply to Private Confession. On the one hand we find the Protestant churches maintaining (with a few exceptions) that Private Confession has no strict Biblical foundation and was not practiced in the early church. On the other hand, there is the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, stating that the practice of Private Confession is a part of the sacrament of Penance; Private Confession has Biblical foundation and is found to be practiced from the earliest times in the history of the church.

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[1] Acts 26:18.

[2] Ephesians 1:7.

[3] Ephesians 4:32.

[4] Colossians 1:14.

[5] Colossians 2:13.

In this respect key terms seem not to be confession and absolution, but "metanoia" and "kleis."[1] "Metanoia" in the King James Version is translated as "repentance."[2] In the Septuagint "metanoia" is used as a translation of the Hebrew term "teschuvah" deriving from the verb "schuv." This means "to convert."[3] The term was already known at the time of Christ. For John the Baptist it was a central term and Jesus also uses it.[4] "Metanoia" indicates a change of mind, a change of attitude;[5] it is a submission to the will of God. In "metanoia" there is repentance, but there is also a turning towards God. This turning to God is an act of God not of man. Thus the term "epistrefein" is used in connection with "metanoia." Sometimes they are used side by side,[6] sometimes only the one or the other includes the content of both.[7]

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[1] Cf. Lindberg, op. cit., pp. 7-16. The discussion of these terms follow to a certain extent that of Lindberg.

[2] Matthew 3:2; 3:8; 4:17; Luke 5:32.

[3] This translation is used among others in Norwegian, Danish, and is literary "sich umwenden," "to turn around."

[4] Matthew 3:2; 4:17; 11:20; 11:21; 12:41; 13:15; 18:3; Mark 1:15; 6:12; Luke 13:3,5; 15:10. These are not really frequent when you consider the fact that they are parallels.

[5] O. Hallesby, Den Kristelige Troslaere, II (Oslo: Lutherstiftelsens Forlag, 1938), 319.

[6] Acts 3:19, 26:20.

[7] Matthew 4:17; Luke 5:32; Acts 26:18; I Thessalonians 1:9.

Protestant theology as a whole agrees that man's conversion ("metanoia") has two elements, repentance and faith.

Roman Catholic theology translates "metanoia" as "poenitentia," which means penitence and this is usually understood "to do penance."[1]

The term "kleis" means "key." Lindberg points to the fact that "the keys" are often used both in Biblical and non-Biblical religions.[2] In later Judaism, Michael is the keeper of the keys to heaven; in Greek religions, Pluto has the keys to Hades. In the Revelation, Christ is said to have the keys both to hell and to death,[3] and in Luke the Scribes have the key of knowledge.[4]

However, of more importance is Matthew 16:18-19 where Jesus says to Peter: ". . .thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church. . . . I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Origen and Luther understood "the rock" to mean Peter's faith. Others understood it as Peter's confession in the previous verse. The Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches interpret this to be the person Peter. Some Protestant theologians refer "the rock" to Peter himself having been given a saving faith.[1]

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[1] McNeill, op. cit., p. 91. This understanding is based on the faulty rendering of metanoia as agite poenitentiam in the Vulgate.

[2] Lindberg, op. cit., p. 12.

[3] Revelation 1:18.

[4] Luke 11:52.

Further, Protestant theology beginning with Luther, understands this passage to mean that the keys are given to Peter first, and then to the other disciples and the church.[2] Roman Catholic theology says the power belongs to Peter, and from him to his successor, the Pope. The latter has the power to bind and to loose, and he has through ordination, submitted some of his power to the priesthood. Roman Catholic understanding of these passages forces their theology to teach that "poenitentia" involves some action of man, namely "to do penance." Since the power of the keys only is given to the Pope and to the clergy, it follows that Rome maintains that private confession to a priest, followed by his absolution, has strong Biblical foundation.

From its basic understanding of "metanoia" and "kleis," Protestantism maintains that a man's private confession to a priest, followed by his declared absolution, has no clear Biblical foundation; but it does have a relation to Biblical thought. "Metanoia" consists of repentance and faith, and does not necessarily include confession of sins to any man. The power of the keys is given to the church and the congregation, and whenever absolution is declared by any member of the church, he speaks on behalf of God and the congregation. He is never given this authority by any apostolic succession.

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[1] A recent treatment is that of Oscar Cullmann, Peter, Disciple, Apostle and Martyr (Philadelphia, 1954).

[2] Cf. Matthew 18:18; John 20:23; I Peter 2:5; 2:9.

2. The Development of Private Confession.

Protestant theologians will have great difficulty in finding a directive in the Bible concerning Private Confession. Furthermore, they will search in vain for proof of the practice of Private Confession in the first centuries of the church. On the other hand, it is evident that confession in public was commonly practiced. This confession was not a confession of the sins of many persons at the same time, but a single person's sins confessed in public, i.e., in the congregation. When people came to John the Baptist and confessed their sins,[1] it was probably a confession in public. Certainly we hear about confession in public in Acts when the congregation in Ephesus increased its number by many believers who "came, and confessed, and showed their deeds."[2]

This kind of confession early became a part of church discipline. Sin was regarded as sin both against God and against the "koinonia," the congregation. Strict order was kept,[3] but inspite of this problems grew larger.[4] Sins such as murder, adultery and idolatry were regarded as unforgiveable.[5] The church fathers Tertullian and Origen[6] accepted no compromises, but Hermas and Clement[7] were somewhat less severe.

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[1] Matthew 3:6; Mark 1:5.

[2] Acts 19:18.

[3] I Thessalonians 5:11; Romans 14:19; James 5:16.

[4] Revelations 2 and 3.

[5] Scriptural basis was Matthew 12:31f; Mark 3:28f; Hebrews 12.

[6] Tertullian died between 220-240; Origen died A.D. 253.

[7] Hermas died 125, Clement died A.D. 200. Cf. McNeill, op. cit., pp. 89-93.

The pressing question was what to do with baptized members who had fallen into sin. Hermas teaches in his book The Shepherd that after baptism man is expected to live without sin. However, in his grace God grants him one more penance if he repents and confesses his sins. This view was subsequently accepted by the church, and the foundation was laid for a sacrament of penance consisting of repentance, confession, absolution, and satisfaction. Tertullian went a step further in understanding "poenitentia" as an act performed by man, and as some kind of offering. By repentance, confession, and satisfaction he could gain forgiveness for his sins.

The care of souls became a concern for the clergy. Ambrose[1] speaks about personal qualifications, but maintains the importance of church office. The concern for the church as a whole must precede the single individual. Chrysostom[2] writes in Peri Hierosynes that soul care can only be performed by a priest, through his "blessed hands." Thus soul care became a correlate to the sacrament, derived from it and led to it.

Still confession in public was commonly, but not exclusively, practiced. Origen maintained that confession in private could be used in addition to the one in public.[3] Further, there are indications that confession in private and guidance were practiced increasingly in monasteries.[1] The practice could not have been very widespread, for Augustine[2] was concerned only about confession in public. Pope Leo the Great[3] may have given consent to secret confession. At least he said that it was sufficient to confess to God and to a priest. In the beginning of the sixth century secret confession of smaller sins was taught by the great "pastor" among the popes, Gregor the Great.[4] In Liber Regulae Pastoralis he wrote about the care of souls which he calls the highest art, "art artium," performed by ordained men who were mediators for others' sins; intercessors to calm the wrath of God. The carer for souls must be without faults, live a holy life, rid himself of sensual powers, be spiritual, suffer and enjoy himself with those seeking him. In order to fulfill his task, he should not only help and guide men, but dominate and lead them. In this way secret confession could be of great help.

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[1] Ambrose died 397. For the following cf. McNeill, op. cit., pp. 95-111.

[2] Chrysostom died 404.

[3] A "Confession in private" was not followed by absolution, as opposed to the later practice of "Private Confession." "Confession in public" was usually not followed by a declared absolution, as different from the later practice of "Public Confession."

These latter incidents do not mean that confession in public was replaced by confession in private or secret confession. It does mean, however, that confession in private to a priest usually preceded the confession in public in church. Further it is known that confession in private did not necessarily have to be followed by public penance. R. C. Mortimer shows in his book The Origin of Private Penance[1] that Pope Siricius in 385 permitted a priest to absolve a man on his deathbed. This is therefore an example of Private Confession. Siricius made it a firm rule that the clergy was not subject to public penance.[2] In Constance we read about a "presbyter of penance" in 391,[3] but Mortimer concludes in his studies of the time up to Gregor the Great " . . .we have been studying a period which provides the seeds, no doubt, but probably not the full development of the Sacrament of Private Penance."[4]

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[1] Cf. McNeill, op. cit., pp. 95ff.

[2] Augustine lived 354-430.

[3] Pope 440-461.

[4] Pope 590-604.

There is a wide gap of knowledge about the practiced forms of confession and absolution between the sixth and seventh centuries and those of five hundred years later. The sacrament of penance is discussed by the theologians, but by the twelfth century confession in public has all but disappeared. In its place is found the wide practice of private confession and absolution (i.e., Private Confession).[5]

Different studies have been done in this field, but a convincing theory still has to be found. The best one is probably offered by McNeill in his monumental study of the history of the cure of souls. He says that a bridge exists in the so-called "books of penitence"[6] written by Irish and English monks from the sixth century. There remain fragments from a book as early as 461;[1] but the first complete book which is preserved dates from 550.[2] The monks retained the ideals of monastic life. From pre-Christian times "wise men" were found among the monks called "anmkara," meaning soul-friend. Everybody needed an anmkara who had great authority. These men may have performed secret confession even if nothing is written about Private Confession before the year 900. Books of penitence wer written in increasing numbers from which it can be seen that penitence became composition and commutation, the former meaning that payment took place in the satisfaction, the latter that penitence was made shorter than prescribed by making it more severe.

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[1] R. C. Mortimer, The Origin of Private Penance (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), pp. 1ff.

[2] Ibid., pp. 154ff.

[3] McNeill, op.cit., p. 98.

[4] Mortimer, op. cit., p. 190.

[5] Cf. McNeill, op. cit., p. 112.

[6] McNeill, op. cit., pp. 112-135.

Several councils tried to combine or destroy many books of penitence without much success. They remained, and so did Private Confession. In addition the common confession of sins by the entire congregation was practiced, followed by common absolution. (This is what is called Public or General Confession.) As time passed, Private Confession became the most important one, and this practice led to the decision made at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 under the leadership of Pope Pious III:

> "Every Christian, of either sex, who has come to years of discretion, is to confess his sins to his own priest at least once a year, to carry out to the best of his ability the penance imposed upon him, and devoutly to receive at Easter at least, the Sacrament of the Eucharist; unless, for good cause, on the advice of the

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[1] By St. Patrick.

[2] By St. Finnean.

> priest, he defers until later the receiving of this Sacrament. Anyone not conforming to this prescription is to be excluded from the Church, and in case of death will not receive ecclesiastical burial.
>
> "The ordinance is to be published frequently in the churches so that no one may be able to plead the excuse of ignorance. If anyone, from valid motives, desires to confess to another priest, he is to ask and obtain the permission of his own priest, without which permission the second priest cannot loose or bind him. . . ."[1]

3. Trends in the Catholic Church as Basis for this Development.

The practice of Private Confession may have different roots, and may be especially related to the development started in the British Isles. However, this alone does not explain its gaining official status. Along with the practical development there are in this period several tendencies and forces all of which played a part in Private Confession attaining this unique place.[2] A few of them should be mentioned.

The Mass has been the center of Catholic theology since 800, and the essential content of the Mass was soon considered the sacrifice of the Mass, "in the Holy Mass is given to God a true and real sacrifice, namely the unbloody offering of Christ's body and blood."[3] Thus the Holy Communion became not a sacrament of forgiveness, but a sacrament through which merit could be gained. On the other hand was the uncertainty about the use of Holy Communion. One would be eternally condemned if one participated without being worthy. Nobody would really know. However, by confessing to the priest who had the power of the keys, man could be safe by being absolved.

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[1] Dict. Theol. Cath., XII, cols. 949f.

[2] Cf. Lindberg, op. cit., pp. 25-75.

[3] Ibid., p. 39, quoting Diekamp, Kath. Dogmatik, III, 113.

The Canon Law prevailed. This term was used about standards of living even through the first three centuries. In the following period much work was done in outlining "juris canonici." In great detail laws and rules were written in 'Decretum Gratiani' in the twelfth century, and Pope Gregor IX made a large collection a few years after the Council of Trent.[1] God was the ultimate judge, but the church acted on his behalf. When man came to his priest, he was met by a representative of God, i.e., God as the judge. When man failed, he had to do penance. The priest became the one giving the sentence. Nowhere could this be done more effectively than in the sacrament of penance.

The juridical view gained ground in most fields of theology. God's grace and love were not forgotten, but by doing good deeds and by following the instructions of the Church, man could gain merit and forgiveness. This was the case not the least in the theological thought connected with penance. Certainly a tension existed. Bernhard of Clairvoux said that the whole life ought to be penance, and men like Augustine and Clement stressed God's love in penance. These ideas never disappeared. But from the time of Tertullian penance has been more and more regarded as a "satisfactio congrue," a payment for the debt of sin. Scholars like Abelard, Hugo of St. Victor, and Peter Lombard attempted to combine these elements.

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[1] "Corpus Juris Canonici" is the name used from the 16th century to designate a still larger collection of which "Decretum Gratiani" and the decretals of Gregor comprise the first two parts.

The one who really succeeded was Thomas Aquinas. He taught that penance is a sacrament containing the words of the priest (ego te absolvo) and the visible acts of confession. The sacrament of penance consists of contrition-confession-absolution-satisfaction. Contrition is man's experienced repentance. He is afraid of God's judgment. This repentance is attrition, which is changed to contrition by God's grace. Contrition is in itself enough to obtain God's forgiveness, but in contrition there is also a wish of confession which has to be made to a priest. Thomas places absolution after the confession. The penitent, however, must fulfill satisfaction told him by the priest. If not absolution is void. Satisfaction may consist of fasting, giving gifts, praying and hundreds of things which came to be carefully written down in penitential books. The idea of satisfaction is partly to have some penalty for what is done, partly to be of help in the future.

The teaching about purgatory has its source in the juridical setup. Man believing in God and submitting to the Church, need not fear eternal condemnation. He may still have committed "peccata venialia" (sins which can be forgiven) without having remembered or confessed them to his priest. In this case he has to be cleansed in purgatory before he can reach heaven. This punishment is not small: "Minima poeno purgatorii maior est maxima poena mundi" --the smallest punishment in purgatory is larger than the largest in the world.[1] People were, of course, afraid, and Thomas defends the consequent teaching about indulgences. A man not punished on earth has to be punished before he can reach his heavenly home.

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[1] Quoted from Lindberg, op. cit., p. 34.

The practice of Private Confession attained its unique place also by the Catholic understanding of sanctification. Sanctification is grace granted to man by God, "infusio gratiae." This takes place first of all through baptism. By sinning, especially mortal sins, "peccata mortalis," man loses his status of grace. This can be regained only through the sacrament of penance.

During the Middle Ages the Church became an institution of great power and influence. The Church ruled above the State, the Pope above the Caesar, the clergy above the people. The decree of 1215 was almost a logical result of the long and successful struggle for power. By law the priest achieved his lasting place between God and people, he was the one to advise and direct the souls, and no one was excepted from this rule.

In summarizing the Protestant view, the practice of Private Confession cannot claim to have any definite Biblical foundation. Further we have to maintain that Private Confession was at the most, practiced to a very small extent during the first centuries. However, gradually it grew stronger and replaced the practice of both the old confession in public and the newer Public Confession. Finally through the influence of prevailing theological thought, Private Confession reached sacramental status in Roman Catholicism. From being a minor means in pastoral care, Private Confession became to the Papal Church perhaps the most important means and sacrament in guiding, advising, controlling, and directing the souls.

PART ONE

PRIVATE CONFESSION IN LUTHERAN REFORMATION

CHAPTER I

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION IN THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONAL BOOKS

The Lutheran Church has been and is a confessional church.[1] Some may regard this a weakness, making it almost impossible for Lutheran churches even to consider a merger with other Protestant bodies. Others regard the confessional emphasis as a strength, guarding the Lutheran Church from leaving her Biblical foundation. Within the Church several attempts have been made during her history to accept teachings and doctrines opposed to the confessional writings, and even to change some statements. However, the different church bodies--even the so-called liberal ones--have returned to the former basis. In our time, every Lutheran minister and teacher takes a pledge to teach and live in accordance with the Bible and its doctrines. One may be in disagreement about interpretation of confessional details, but some confessional books are accepted by all.

A. The Book of Concord.

In the year 1580, the book Concordia was published.[2] It was the final result of an effort made by Lutheran theologians to write a clear, confessional basis for all Lutheran churches.

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[1] The term "confessional" means: The authoritative ecclesiastical formulations of religious doctrines. Cf. New S. H., XI, 199.

[2] Printed in Leipzig and Dresden 1580 by order of August, Duke of Saxony.

The Concordia or (in English) The Book of Concord[1] contains the following parts:

a) The three ecumenical creeds, namely the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian;

b) The Augsburg Confession of 1530;

c) The Apology of the Augsburg Confession of 1531;

d) The Small Catechism of 1529 (and 1531);

e) The Large Catechism of 1529;

f) The Smalcald Articles of 1537 with the addition of The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope;

g) Formula of Concord of 1577.

The three ecumenical creeds are shared by other denominations. They underline the fact that the Lutheran reformers did not want to establish a new church, but continue the old one in a pure, "reformed" appearance.

The other writings in the Book of Concord are specifically Lutheran, shared by no other churches. For our purpose of inquiring about their teaching of confession and absolution, it seems to be convenient to follow this method: a short discussion of the historical circumstances which caused each book, and then quotation of statements from the specific book about confession and absolution.

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[1] All references are to the new American edition of The Book of Concord (Muhlenberg Press: Philadelphia, 1959). The abbreviation B.C. will be used.

B. The Augsburg Confession or Confessio Augustana.[1]

The years of reformation up to 1580 may be divided into three periods.[2] The first one was from 1517, date of Luther's publishing the 95 theses, to 1530, date of the Diet of Augsburg. The second period was one of the struggle for survival of Protestantism, and lasted to the Treaty of Augsburg in 1555, giving legal status to the Protestants. The third period was characterized by internal, confessional struggle, and came to an end in 1580 by the acceptance and publication of the Book of Concord. With the exception of his catechisms, the writings of Luther in the first period[3] did not become confessional books, but they laid a solid theological basis.

The famous Diet of Worms in 1521[4] and the less known diets in Speyer in 1526 and 1529[5] gave no opportunities for official statements from the "Protestants."[6] However, there were other incidents where statements were written, namely the so-called Schwabach Articles, and the Marburg Articles.

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[1] The book was written both in German and Latin.

[2] New S.H., IX, 419ff.

[3] Some of the most important in addition to his 95 theses and the two catechisms are: The Address to the German Nobility (1520); The Babylonian Captivity of the Church (1520); The Freedom of a Christian (1520); De Servo Arbitrio (1525); Concerning the Lord's Supper (1528).

[4] Summoned to the diet, Luther defended his writings and position against the Pope.

[5] The diets were called by Charles V (the emperor) to settle problems raised by the Lutheran expansion in Germany.

[6] The name given after the formal "Protest" submitted by the Lutherans against the pro-Catholic resolution at the second Diet in Speyer.

The Schwabach Articles were written during the summer of 1529 by theologians from Wittenberg, stating the Lutheran basis for cooperation with other evangelical movements. In the fall of the same year, Luther and Zwingli met in Marburg. If possible an agreement of theological differences was to be reached. Luther personally wrote fifteen theses known as the Marburg Articles, including such subjects as the doctrine of the Trinity, Christ, faith, justification, Baptism, confession, good works, and order.[1] These were presented at the meeting.

In January, 1530, Emperor Charles V invited the Diet to meet in April. Knowing that religious questions would be the most important ones, Luther, Melanchton, and their helpers, Bugenhagen and Jonas, were asked by one of the electors to prepare a statement of the Protestant belief. These Wittenberg theologians met in Torgau, and wrote a summary known as the Torgau Articles. Leaving Luther behind, Melanchton and the others went to Augsburg. On the basis of the above mentioned Schwabach, Marburg, and Torgau Articles, Melanchton worked out an extensive draft which was sent to Luther and approved by him in May. Several changes were made during the following weeks, but, finally on June 23rd, it was adopted by evangelical nobles, counsellors and theologians as the Lutheran view. Two days later the Augsburg Confession was presented in German and Latin before the Diet. The German text was read before the assembly, and thereafter the two copies were given to the Emperor.

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[1] Zwingli signed these articles, but he and Luther gave them their own interpretation which, in fact, widened the gap.

Thus the *Augsburg Confession* was created. The two original manuscripts are lost, but more than fifty copies have been found. These prove there are some small differences between the Latin and the German texts, but they are never in contradiction to each other.

Almost immediately the *Augsburg Confession* was regarded as the authentic expression of Lutheran doctrine, and soon was accepted as confessional by the various churches. Since the time of Reformation, this document has been accepted and retained by *all* Lutheran church bodies as normative.[1]

In making an examination of the *Augsburg Confession*, we we find that several difficult controversies are not mentioned at all. Nothing, for example, is mentioned of the universal priesthood, nothing about man's incapacity to do good, nothing about the Pope who was regarded as Antichrist,[2] nothing about the differences in view of the saints, and almost nothing about purgatory and indulgences. This lack of treatment shows that if possible, the declaration was meant to be the basis for peace and not a break. Furthermore, many statements stress the similarities between Catholic and evangelical doctrines, and Melanchton is careful to show that the Lutherans did not mix with Anabaptists or other sects. On the other hand the document is clear enough in all statements discussed and these are many.

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[1] Melanchton regarded the *Augsburg Confession* as his work, and felt free to make changes. In 1540 he re-wrote some parts, especially changing the content of Article X concerning the Lord's Supper. At first there were no reactions, but later this edition was heavily attacked by the strict Lutherans as being symbolical for Melanchtonians and "Crypto-Calvinists." The two editions of 1530 and 1540 soon got the names *Augustana Invariata* and *Augustana Variata*. American Lutheranism is careful to stress "The Unaltered Augsburg Confession," cf. *infra*, pp. 167-191. In the *Book of Concord* we have the "unaltered" edition.

[2] W 17 II, 449 -- SL 11. 2300 f.

The Augsburg Confession has twenty-eight articles, written in two parts. The first part has twenty-one articles and is called "Articles of Faith and Doctrine."[1] The second part has seven articles and is named "Articles about Matters in Dispute," in which an account is given of the abuses which have been corrected.[2]

Confession and absolution are treated in Articles XI, XII, and XXV. Article XI, German text:[3]

> "CONFESSION
> It is taught among us that private absolution should be retained and not allowed to fall into disuse. However, in confession it is not necessary to enumerate all trespasses and sins, for this is impossible. Ps. 19:12, 'Who can discern his errors?'"[4]

Latin text:

> "Our churches teach that private absolution should be retained in the churches. However, in confession an enumeration of all sins is not necessary, for this is not possible according to the Psalm, 'Who can discern his errors?'"[5]

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[1] Article I on God; II Original Sin; III The Son of God; IV Justification; V The Office of the Ministry; VI The New Obedience; VII The Church; VIII What the Church Is; IX Baptism; X The Lord's Supper; XI Confession; XII Repentance; XIII The Use of the Sacraments; XIV Order in the Church; XV Church Usages; XVI Civil Government; XVII The Return of Christ for Judgment; XVIII Freedom of the Will; XIX The Cause of Sin; XX Faith and Good Works; XXI The Cult of the Saints.

[2] Article XXII on Both Kinds in the Sacrament; XXIII The Marriage of Priests; XXIV The Mass; XXV Confession; XXVI The Distinction of Foods; XXVII Monastic Vows; XXVIII The Power of Bishops.

[3] All underlinings in the text are done by the author, to make it easier to find the passages regarded especially important in our connection.

[4] B.C., p. 34.

[5] Ibid., p. 34.

Article XII in the *Augsburg Confession* has the heading "Repentance," but is also concerned about absolution. Article XII, German text:

> "REPENTANCE
> It is taught among us that those who sin after Baptism receive forgiveness of sin whenever they come to repentance, and absolution should not be denied them by the church. Properly speaking, true repentance is nothing else than to have contrition and sorrow, or terror, on account of sin, and yet at the same time to believe the Gospel and absolution (namely, that sin has been forgiven and grace has been obtained through Christ), and this faith will comfort the heart and again set it at rest."[1]

The Latin text[2] is even stricter:

> "Our churches teach that those who have fallen after Baptism can receive forgiveness of sins whenever they are converted, and the church ought to impart absolution to those who return to repentance. Properly speaking, repentance consists of these two parts: one is contrition, that is, terror smiting the conscience with a knowledge of sin, and the other is faith, which is born of the Gospel, or of absolution, believes that sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, comforts the conscience, and delivers it from terror. Then good works, which are the fruits of repentance, are bound to follow."[3]

In the second part of the *Augsburg Confession* "about abuses in the Roman Church having been corrected in the Evangelical Church," confession is treated once more. Article XXV, German text:

> "CONFESSION
> Confession has not been abolished by the preachers on our side. The custom has been retained among us of not administering the sacrament to those who have not previously been examined and absolved. At the same time the people are carefully instructed concerning the consolation

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 34ff.

[2] According to Roman Catholic doctrines penance was a sacrament and consisted of contrition, confession, absolution, satisfaction. All sins had to be confessed. Accepted at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. Cf. *infra*, pp. 80-87.

[3] *B.C.*, p. 34f.

> of the Word of absolution so that they may esteem absolution as a great and precious thing. It is not the voice or word of the man who speaks it, but it is the Word of God, who forgives sin, for it is spoken in God's stead and by God's command. We teach with great diligence about this command and power of keys and how comforting and necessary it is for terrified consciences. We also teach that God requires us to believe this absolution as much as we heard God's voice from heaven, that we should joyfully comfort ourselves with absolution, and that we should know that through such faith we obtain forgiveness of sins. In former times the preachers who taught much about confession never mentioned a word concerning these necessary matters but only tormented consciences with long enumerations of sins, with satisfaction with indulgences, with pilgrimages and the like. Many of our opponents themselves acknowledge that we have written about and treated a true Christian repentance in a more fitting fashion than had been done for a long time.
>
> "Concerning confession we teach that no one should be compelled to recount sins in detail, for this is impossible. As the psalmist says, 'Who can discern his errors?' Jeremiah also says, 'The heart is desperately corrupt; who can understand it?' Our wretched human nature is so deeply submerged in sins that it is unable to perceive or know them all, and if we were to be absolved only from those which we can enumerate we would be helped but little. On this account there is no need to compel people to give a detailed account of their sins . . . . Yet the preachers on our side diligently teach that confession is to be retained for the sake of absolution (which is its chief and most important part), for the consolation of terrified consciences, and also for other reasons."[1]

The Latin text states the same thing in different words.

Article XXV, Latin text:

> "CONFESSION
>
> Confession has not been abolished in our churches for it is not customary to administer the body of Christ except to those who have previously been examined and absolved. The people are very diligently taught concerning faith in connection with absolution, a matter about which there has been profound silence before this time. Our people are taught to esteem absolution highly because it is the voice of God and is pronounced by God's command. The power of keys is praised, and people are reminded of the great consolation it brings to terrified consciences, are told that God requires faith to believe such absolution as God's own voice heard from heaven,

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 61-63.

> and are assured that such faith truly obtains and receives the forgiveness of sins . . . . *Nevertheless, confession is retained among us on account of the great benefit of absolution and because it is otherwise useful to consciences.*"[1]

Only a final passage will be quoted from the *Augsburg Confession*. In Article XXVIII is treated "The Power of Bishops."[2] The article is mainly an attempt to distinguish between the two authorities, the spiritual and the temporal. In a summary of a bishop's duties, Article XXVIII, Latin text states:

> "Our teachers hold that according to the Gospel the power of keys or the power of bishops is a power or command of God to preach the Gospel, *to remit and retain sins*, and to administer the sacraments. . . . When one inquires about the jurisdiction of bishops, therefore, civil authority must be distinguished from ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Hence according to the Gospel (or, as they say, by divine right) no jurisdiction belongs to the bishops as bishops (that is, to those to whom has been committed the ministry of the Word and sacraments) *except to forgive sins*, to reject doctrine which is contrary to the Gospel, and to exclude from the fellowship of the church ungodly persons whose wickedness is known, doing all this without human power, but simply by the Word."[3]

C. *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession or Apologia Confessionis Augustanae.*[4]

After the reading of the *Augsburg Confession* at the Diet in Augsburg[5] the Roman Catholic opponents came together and wrote a reply *Confutatio Confessionis Augustanae*. It was read and adopted by the Emperor in August, 1530, and Protestants were required to conform to it. Refusing this, they were told to write an apology for the Augsburg Confession. This was done by Melanchton. Without any copy of the Catholic document he finished his writing the last of September. The Emperor refused to accept it. On his way back to Wittenberg, Melanchton, having finally gotten a copy of the Confutatio, began rewriting the Apology. This writing was published in 1531 during the spring. The Apology was written in Latin, but a German translation was published later the same year.

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 61-63.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 81-94.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 81, 84.

[4] The articles were originally written only in Latin. Abbreviation used hereafter is: *Apology*.

[5] Cf. *supra*, p. 31.

The Apology, written entirely by Melanchton, was soon accepted by the Lutherans. The following year an official statement from the evangelical estates declared that the Apology was an "apology and exposition of the confession along with the confession."[1] Ever since, these two books have been regarded as an expression of Lutheran doctrines.

Different from the Augsburg Confession, the Apology is not a short confessional statement. It is rather a theological dissertation attempting defense of the former and refute Catholic charges made against it. The Apology follows the articles in the Augsburg Confession, which means that for our purposes we are especially interested in Articles XI and XIII. Article XXV in the Augsburg Confession, is omitted in the Apology, but appears as the second half of Article XII.

The Roman Confutatio accepted the view of the Augsburg Confession - that confession and private absolution should be retained,[1] but maintained that it had to be done annually, and in detail and according to accepted Catholic doctrine.[2]

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[1] New S.H., I, 362.

Article XI in the Apology disproves this in some details, but proceeds to restate the Lutheran position.

> "It is well known that we have so explained and extolled the blessing of absolution and the power of keys that many troubled consciences have received consolation from our teaching. They have heard that it is the command of God--yes, the very voice of the Gospel--that we should believe the absolution and firmly believe that the forgiveness of sins is granted us freely for Christ's sake and that we should be sure that by this faith we are truly reconciled to God . . . ."[3]

Article XII, "Penitence," is almost a small dissertation in itself.[4] It is very polemical against Catholic doctrines because "the issue at hand is a great one, the chief doctrine in the Gospel, the forgiveness of sins."[5] Having stated in eleven defined points the Roman teachings which they consider false and foreign to Holy Scripture,[6] the articles go on to define and clarify the Lutheran view: "We have given penitence two parts, namely, contrition and faith."[7]

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[1] Cf. supra, p. 33.

[2] Roman Confutatio, Pt. I, Art. XII: . . . When they ascribe only two parts to penitence, they come into conflict with the whole church, which from the time of the apostles has held and believed that there are three parts in penitence: contrition, confession, and satisfaction . . . . Quoted from B.C., p. 182.

[3] B.C., p. 180.

[4] Ibid., pp. 182-211.

[5] Ibid., p. 184.

[6] Ibid., p. 185. No. 7 says: "The enumeration of sins in confession, as our opponents command it, is necessary by divine right."

[7] Ibid., p. 185.

The entire article explains and defends this,[1] and also has declarations about the nature of confession and absolution.

> "The power of the keys administers and offers the Gospel through absolution, which is the true voice of the Gospel. In speaking of faith, therefore, we also include absolution since 'faith comes from what is heard,' as Paul says (Rom. 10:17). Hearing the Gospel and hearing absolution strengthens and consoles the conscience. Because God truly quickens through the Word, the keys truly forgive sin before him, according to the statement (Luke 10:16), 'He who hears you, hears me.' Therefore we must believe the voice coming from heaven. Absolution may properly be called a sacrament of penitence, even as the more learned of the scholastics say."[2]

However, even if absolution is dependent upon the hearing of the Gospel and upon faith, it cannot be disconnected from confession:

> "First, we ask our opponents whether the reception of absolution is part of penitence or not. If they try to make a subtle distinction separating absolution from confession, we fail to see what value there is in confession without absolution. If, on the other hand, they do not separate the reception of absolution from confession, then they must maintain that faith is part of penitence since only faith can accept the absolution."[3]

The use of Private Confession is clearly referred to in the beginning of the second part of the article, concerning confession and satisfaction.

> "For we also keep confession, especially because of absolution, which is the Word of God that the power of keys proclaims to individuals by divine authority. It would therefore be wicked to remove private absolution from the church. And those who despise private absolution understand neither the forgiveness of sins nor the power of the keys."[4]

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[1] The importance of faith in confession and absolution will be discussed in another connection. Cf. infra, pp. 98f.

[2] B.C., The Apology, Art. XII, "Penitence," p. 187. It is referred to Duns Scotus, Commentary on the Sentences, IV d. 16, q. 1, 7.

[3] B.C., p. 190.

[4] Ibid., p. 197.

Beside Private Confession, there are at least two other kinds, both of which are mentioned in the following.

> "The Psalms mention confession from time to time; for example (Ps. 32:5), 'I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord"; then thou didst forgive the guilt of my sins.' Such confession, made to God is itself contrition. For when confession is made to God, it must come from the heart and not just from the voice, as in a play. Therefore such a confession is contrition . . . . 'Against thee only have I sinned, so that thou art justified in thy sentence and blameless in thy judgment.' That is, 'I confess that I am a sinner worthy of eternal wrath, and I cannot set my righteousness or my merits against thy wrath . . . . Maybe someone will quote James 5:15, "Confess your sins to one another." But this does not speak of the specific confession to be made to priests but of the reconciliation of brethren to each other, for it commands that the confession be mutual.'"[1]

In one of the quotations above we read "Absolution may properly be called a sacrament of penitence."[2] Here the term sacrament is attached to absolution, and in Article XIII, "The Number and Use of the Sacraments," we find it confirmed.[3]

> "If we define sacraments as 'rites which have the command of God and to which the promise of grace has been added,' we can easily determine which are sacraments in the strict sense. By this definition, rites instituted by men are not sacraments in the strict sense since men do not have the authority to promise grace. Hence signs instituted without God's command are not sure signs of grace, even though they may instruct or admonish the simple folk. The genuine sacraments, therefore, are Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and absolution (which is the sacrament of penitence), for these rites have the commandment of God and the promise of grace, which is the heart of the New Testament. When we are baptized, when we eat the Lord's body, when we are absolved, our hearts should firmly believe that God really forgives us for Christ's sake."[4]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 197f.

[2] Cf. supra, p. 39.

[3] Cf. also the section on Luther's Large Catechism, infra, pp. 43-47.

[4] B.C., The Apology, Art. XIII, "The Number and Use of the Sacraments," p. 211. This definition is used by Melanchton in his book, Loci communes rerum theologicarum seu hypotyposes theologicae (1521).

D. Luther's Small Catechism.

For several years in the 1520's Luther had been concerned about writing a catechism for instruction of children as well as a larger catechism for use by ministers and "house-masters."

The first editions of his Small Catechism appeared in 1529, and were followed by several new editions even during his lifetime.[1] There are variants in the different editions, and the "Short Form of Confession" did not appear before the fourth known edition in 1529. In 1531 there appeared what is regarded as the final form of the Small Catechism, and this form is adopted in the Book of Concord. The section on confession is here placed between the sections of Baptism and Holy Communion, and is the fifth main part of the catechism. It has two quite different parts, the first on the nature of confession and absolution, the second an almost liturgical form of Private Confession. Since Luther's Small Catechism is the most widely known book of all his writings, we shall quote the whole section as it appears in the Book of Concord.

> "Part V. Confession and Absolution.
> How Plain People Are to Be Taught to Confess
>
> "What is confession?
> Answer: Confession consists of two parts. One is that we confess our sins. The other is that we receive absolution or forgiveness from the confessor as from God himself, by no means doubting but firmly believing that our sins are thereby forgiven before God in heaven.
>
> "What sins should we confess?
> Answer: Before God we should acknowledge that we are

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[1] Luther's Small Catechism has been used and is used among all Lutherans. However, since there are different opinions about the place and form for his section "Confession," it will be discussed in Chapter V, B.

guilty of all manner of sins, even those of which we are not aware, as we do in the Lord's Prayer. Before the confessor, however, we should confess only those sins of which we have knowledge and which trouble us.

"What are such sins?
Answer: Reflect on your condition in the light of the Ten Commandments: whether you are a father or mother, a son or daughter, a master or servant; whether you have been disobedient, unfaithful, lazy, ill-tempered, or quarrelsome; whether you have harmed anyone by word or deed; and whether you have stolen, neglected or wasted anything, or done other evil.

"Please, give me a brief form of confession,
Answer: You shall say to the confessor: 'Dear Pastor, please hear my confession and declare that my sins are forgiven for God's sake.'

"Proceed.
I, a poor sinner, confess before God that I am guilty of all sins. In particular I confess in your presence that, as a manservant or maidservant etc., I am unfaithful to my master, for here and there I have not done what I was told. I have made my master angry, caused him to curse, neglected to do my duty, and caused him to suffer loss. I have also been immodest in word and deed. I have quarreled with my equals. I have grumbled and sworn at my mistress etc. For all this I am sorry and pray for grace. I mean to do better.

"A master or mistress may say: 'In particular I confess in your presence that I have not been faithful in training my children, servants, and wife to the glory of God. I have cursed. I have set a bad example by my immodest language and actions. I have injured my neighbor by speaking evil of him, overcharging him, giving him inferior goods and short measures.' Masters and mistresses should add whatever else they have done contrary to God's commandments and to their action in life, etc.

"If, however, anyone does not feel that his conscience is burdened by such or by greater sins, he should not worry, nor should he search for and invent other sins, for this would turn confession into torture, he should simply mention one or two sins of which he is aware. For example, 'In particular I confess that I once cursed. On one occasion I also spoke indecently. And I neglected this or that,' etc. Let this suffice.

"If you should have knowledge of no sin at all (which is quite unlikely) you should mention none in particular, but receive forgiveness upon the general confession which you make to God in the presence of the confessor.

"Then the confessor shall say: 'God be merciful to you and strengthen your faith. Amen.'

"Again he shall say: 'Do you believe that the forgiveness I declare is the forgiveness of God?'
Answer: 'Yes, I do.'

"Then he shall say: 'Be it done for you as you have believed.[a] According to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Go in peace.'[b]
(a. Matt. 8:13 b. Mark 5:34; Luke 7:50; 8:48)

"A confessor will know additional passages of the Scriptures with which to comfort and to strengthen the faith of those whose consciences are heavily burdened or who are distressed and sorely tried. This is intended simply as an ordinary form of confession for plain people."[1]

E. Luther's Large Catechism.

This catechism which seems to offer an interpretation of the smaller one, was started before the latter. In the late fall of 1528 Luther began his work with the catechism Pro Pueris et Rudibus which later became the Large Catechism.[2] While writing this, he felt the need for a simpler book for children, so he wrote the small catechism or Enchiridion while still working at the other.

Which one of his catechisms was first published, is not certain.[3] The Large Catechism was published in 1529 containing five parts, i.e., without anything about confession. However, later the same year the second edition was published, and in this is found a confessional exhortation. This section was omitted in the German Book of Concord, and in several later editions of the Large Catechism,[1] however, in most editions it is included.

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[1] B.C., Luther's Small Catechism, Part V, "Confession and Absolution," pp. 349-351.

[2] Luther did not use the title Large Catechism, but German Catechism.

[3] Cf. M. Reu, Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism (Chicago, Ill.: Wartburg Publishing House, 1929), pp. 21f.

Forgiveness of sins is also the core of Luther's Large Catechism. He writes, for example, in his chapter about the creed:

> "Further we believe that in this Christian church we have the forgiveness of sins, which is granted through the holy sacraments and absolution as well as through all the comforting words of the entire Gospel. Toward forgiveness is directed everything that is to be preached concerning the sacraments and, in short, the entire Gospel and all the duties of Christianity."[2]

Forgiveness is found in the Gospel as well as in the sacraments. Luther gives indications that he does not share Melanchton's later view about absolution as the third sacrament.[3] In his teaching about Baptism, he says:

> "Here you see that Baptism, both by its power and by its signification, comprehends also the third sacrament, formerly called Penance, which is really nothing else than Baptism."[4]

This does not mean that he disregards confession and absolution. He gives a comprehensive statement about his view and the value of confession and absolution.

First Luther speaks about confession in general, and stresses the evangelical view:

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[1] B.C., footnote, p. 457.

[2] B.C., Large Catechism, "The Creed," 3rd art., p. 417.

[3] Cf. supra, p. 40

[4] Ibid., "Baptism," p. 415.

> "Concerning confession, we have always taught that it should be voluntary and purged of the pope's tyranny. We have been set free from his coercion and from the intolerable burden he imposed upon the Christian church. Up to now, as we know from experience, there has been no law quite so oppressive as that which forced everyone to make confession on pain of the gravest mortal sin. Moreover, it so greatly burdened and tortured consciences with the enumeration of all kinds of sin that no one was able to confess purely enough. Worst of all, no one taught or understood what confession is and how useful and comforting it is.
>
> "Instead, it was made sheer anguish and a hellish torture since people had to make confession even though nothing was more hateful to them. These three things have now been removed and made voluntary so that we may confess without coercion or fear, and we are released from the torture of enumerating all sins in detail. Moreover, we have the advantage of knowing how to use confession beneficially for the comforting and strengthening of our conscience."[1]

This view he claims to be widely known within the evangelical church, but he is also aware of the advantages people have taken by their freedom from compulsory confession:

> "Everyone knows this now. Unfortunately, men have learned it only too well; they do whatever they please and take advantage of their freedom acting as if they will never need or desire to go to confession anymore. We quickly understand whatever benefits us, and we grasp with uncommon ease whatever in the Gospel is mild and gentle."[2]

Luther makes a distinction between different kinds of confession[3]: the one made by man to God alone, and the one made to our neighbor. Then he comes to Private Confession:

> "Besides this public, daily, and necessary confession, there is also the secret confession which takes place privately before a single brother . . . . This type of confession is not included in the commandment like the other two but is left to everyone to use whenever he needs it. Thus by divine ordinance Christ himself has entrusted

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[1] *B.C., Large Catechism*, p. 457.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 457.

[3] Cf. *supra*, p. 40; *infra*, pp. 94f.

> absolution to his Christian church and commanded us to absolve one another from sins(Matt. 18:15-19). So if there is a heart that feels its sin and desires consolation, it has here a sure refuge when it hears in God's Word that through a man God looses and absolves him from his sins.
>
> "Note, then, as I have often said, that confession consists of two parts. The first is my work and act, when I lament my sin and desire comfort and restoration for my soul. The second is a work which God does, when he absolves me of my sins through a word placed in the mouth of a man. This is the surpassingly grand and noble thing that makes confession so wonderful and comforting."[1]

Luther values this kind of confession very highly, and he returns to it repeatedly. His statements speak for themselves:

> "Our teaching, as I have said, is this: If anybody does not go to confession willingly and for the sake of absolution, let him just forget about it. Yes, and if anybody goes about relying on the purity of his confession, let him just stay away from it. We urge you, however, to confess and express your needs, not for the purpose of performing a work but to hear what God wishes to say to you. The Word of absolution, I say, is what you should concentrate on, magnifying and cherishing it as a great and wonderful treasure to be accepted with all praise and gratitude.[2]
>
> "We advise: If you are poor and miserable, then go and make use of the healing medicine. He who feels his misery and need will develop such a desire for confession that he will run toward it with joy. But those who ignore it and do not come of their own accord, we let go their way. However, they ought to know that we do not regard them as Christians. !
>
> "Thus we teach what a wonderful, precious, and comforting thing confession is, and we urge that such a precious blessing should not be despised, especially when we consider our great need. If you are a Christian, you need neither my compulsion nor the pope's command at any point, but you will compel yourself and beg me for the privilege of sharing in it. However, if you despise it and proudly stay away from confession, then we must come to the conclusion that you are no Christian, and that you ought not to receive the sacrament. For you despise what no Christian ought to despise, and you show thereby that

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[1] B.C., Large Catechism, pp. 458f.

[2] Ibid., p. 459.

> you can have no forgiveness of sin. And this is a sure sign that you also despise the Gospel.[1]
>
> "In short, we approve of no coercion. However, if anyone refuses to hear and heed the warning of our preaching, we shall have nothing to do with him, nor may he have any share in the Gospel. If you are a Christian, you should be glad to run more than a hundred miles for confession, not under the compulsion but rather coming and compelling us to offer it. For here the compulsion must be inverted; we must come under the command and you must come into freedom. We compel no man, but allow ourselves to be compelled, just as we are compelled to preach and administer the sacrament.
>
> "Therefore, when I urge you to go to confession, I am simply urging you to be a Christian. If I bring you to this point, I have also brought you to confession. Those who really want to be good Christians, free from their sins, and happy in their conscience, already have the true hunger and thirst. They snatch at the bread just like a hunted hart, burning with heat and thirst, as Ps. 42:2 says, 'As a hart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for thee, O God.' That is, as a hart trembles with eagerness for a fresh spring, so I yearn and tremble for God's Word, absolution, the sacrament, etc. In this way, you see, confession would be rightly taught, and such a desire and love for it would be aroused that people would come running after us to get it, more than we would like. We shall let the papists torment and torture themselves from it. As for ourselves, however, let us lift our hands in praise and thanks to God that we have attained to this blessed knowledge of confession."[2]

F. The Smalcald Articles.

During the first decades of the Reformation, Luther and his followers hoped that the break with Rome could be healed. This was in vain. But when the Pope (Paul III) called for a council in May 1537,[3] it became urgent for the Lutherans to agree upon a confession. For this purpose Luther wrote twenty articles divided in three divisions, and submitted these in the first days of 1537. A month later a convention met in Smalcald without Luther who was seriously ill. Melanchton was somewhat opposed to Luther's statements about the Lord's Supper. Further he feared that the articles would create disagreement between the evangelical members. The official meeting agreed, and subscribed to the Augsburg Confession and the Apology, together with a new writing of Melanchton, Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope.[1]

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 460.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 460f.

[3] The council came together only in 1545 in Trent.

Luther was apparently not informed of this. A year later he made some smaller modifications, wrote a preface, and prepared the articles for publication. From his preface we understand that he regards his articles, known as the Smalcald Articles, as official.[2] They were not, but became so quite soon. As early as 1544, Hessian theologians regarded them as confessional. From 1563, they were adopted in most bodies of doctrines,[3] and they received a lasting place in the Book of Concord.

The first part of the Smalcald Articles briefly discusses God's majesty. The second part is concerned with subjects in which Luther's views are entirely opposed to the Papal Church.[4]

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[1] Written in Latin: Tractatus de potestate et primatu papae. Cf. infra, part G.

[2] "I assembled these articles and submitted them to our representatives. The latter accepted them, unanimously adopted them as their confession, and resolved that these articles should be presented publicly as the confession of our faith. . . ." B.C., p. 288.

[3] "Corpus doctrinae," Cf. infra, p. 52.

[4] He discussed Christ and Faith; the Mass; the invocation of Saints; chapters and monasteries; the Papacy (B.C., pp. 292-301).

The third part has articles which Luther probably hoped could have been matters for discussion and understanding. However, he shows how evangelical teaching is entirely different in the matter of penitence. The law cannot save man, but God gives help in the Gospel in several ways: in preaching, baptism, holy communion, power of the keys, and confession.

The Roman Catholic Church had forced upon man confession of all sins, but such confession is certainly not necessary. If we repent, repentance is never partial, "for a person who confesses that he is altogether sinful embraces all sins in his confession without omitting or forgetting a single one."[1] God is the only one to forgive sins, but still he has given the power of the keys to his Church:

> "The keys are a function and power given to the church by Christ to bind and loose sins, not only the gross and manifest sins but also those which are subtle and secret and which God alone perceives."[2]

Because this is a blessing and gift to the church which should not be neglected, he writes about confession and absolution:

> "Since absolution or the power of the keys, which was instituted by Christ in the Gospel, is a consolation and help against sin and a bad conscience, confession and absolution should by no means be allowed to fall into disuse in the church, especially for the sake of timid consciences and for the sake of untrained young people who need to be examined and instructed in Christian doctrine.
>
> "However, the enumeration of sins should be left free to everybody to do or not as he will. As long as we are in the flesh we shall not be untruthful if we say, 'I am a poor man, full of sin. I see in my members another law,' etc. (Rom. 7:23). Although private absolution is derived from the office of the keys, it should not

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[1] B.C., Smalcald Articles, p. 309.

[2] Ibid., p. 311.

> be neglected; on the contrary, it should be highly esteemed and valued, like all other functions of the Christian church."[1]

We may add that at the time he was writing these articles, Luther considered them a testament, so that "those who live after me may have my testimony and confession to show where I have stood until now and where, by God's grace, I will continue to stand."[2]

G. Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope.

Melanchton's Treatise was subscribed to at Smalcald. However, Luther's articles soon won precedence over it. The Treatise was supposed to be a supplement to the Augsburg Confession and the Apology, but eventually became rather an appendix to Luther's Smalcald Articles.

In his chapter about "The Power and Jurisdiction of Bishops,"[3] Melanchton makes an interesting statement. In referring to the Augsburg Confession and the Apology, he goes on:

> "The Gospel requires of those who preside over the churches that they preach the Gospel, remit sins, administer the sacraments, and, in addition, exercise juridiction, that is, excommunicate those who are guilty of notorious crimes and absolve those who repent."[4]

"Those who preside over the churches" are not given this right from any human authority. This authority belongs to the Church:

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[1] Ibid., pp. 312f.

[2] Ibid., p. 289.

[3] B.C., Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, pp. 330-334.

[4] Ibid., p. 330.

> ". . .For wherever the church exists, the right to administer the Gospel also exists. Wherefore it is necessary for the church to retain the right of calling, electing, and ordaining ministers.
>
> "This right is a gift given exclusively to the church, and no human authority can take it away from the church. It is as Paul testifies to the Ephesians when he says, 'When he ascended on high he gave gifts to men' (Eph. 4:8, 11, 12). He enumerates pastors and teachers among the gifts belonging exclusively to the church, and he adds that they are given for the work of the ministry and for building up the body of Christ. *Where the true church is, therefore, the right of electing and ordaining ministers must of necessity also be. So in an emergency even a layman absolves and becomes the minister and pastor of another. It is like the example which Augustine relates of two Christians in a ship, one of whom baptized the other (a catechumen), and the latter, after his Baptism, absolved the former.*"[1]

H. The Formula of Concord and the Book of Concord.

Both Luther's *Smalcald Articles* and Melanchton's *Treatise* were written in a period of open struggle between the Catholic Church and the Protestants.[2] This does not mean there was complete doctrinal agreement between the Reformers, and following Luther's death (1546) several divergent groups developed. On the one extreme could be found the Melanchtonians trying to bring accord among Lutherans, Zwinglians and

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 331.

[2] In 1530, Philip of Hesse formed the Smalcald League to defend Protestant interests. Some other important political happenings are: the Smalcald War (1546-47) caused by imperial ban against Philip (the League lost); the three Interims where temporary agreements were made between the Catholic Church and the Protestants; the Regensburg Interim in 1541, the Augsburg Interim in 1548, and the Leipzig Interim later in 1548; the successful war led by the Protestant Maurice of Saxony leading to the treatise in Passau, 1552; and finally the religious peace in Augsburg, 1555, which gave Protestants recognition and legal status in Germany.

Calvinists; on the other extreme were found the so-called Gnesio-Lutherans.[1] Between these two were found the more conservative, but still uncertain Lutherans. As long as there existed the common, deadly enemy of the Roman Catholic Church, the doctrinal struggle had to be kept in check. However, after the Religious Peace in Augsburg, the controvercies became acute.

The need was felt from the different camps to have a "Corpus Doctrinae."[2] This need should encompass those writings which express a true Biblical faith. From the 1550's several local "corpi" appeared, most of them including the Augsburg Confession (1530 edition) and the Apology, but there were many varieties.[3]

Among many Lutherans a strong desire for unity developed, and in 1576 theologians came together in Torgau. Some earlier concords[4] or formulas were used as a basis, and the Torgau Book was created. This book was later rewritten as the Bergen Formula[5] (which is found as "Solid Declarations" in the Formula of Concord). The Bergen Formula was sent to all parts of Germany, and subscribed to by more than 8,000 theologians, ministers and teachers. During the three years it took to get these subscriptions, a preface was worked out, and the Book of Concord was published in 1580.

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[1] The leader was Flacius, a theologian and professor. Some of the controversies were: Adiaphora; faith and good works; the real presence in the Lord's Supper; synergism, Christology.

[2] This term was first used in 1563 (Brunswick).

[3] Some of the better known corpus doctrinae are: The Frankfort Recess of 1558; Corpus doctrinae Philippicum of 1561 containing the main writings of Melanchton; the Wurttenberg Confession of 1559; Formula consensus de doctrina evangelii of 1560; from Lubeck; Corpus Pomeranicum from 1564; Corpus Prutenicum of 1567, Konigsberg; Corpus Thuringicum of 1570, Saxon; Corpus Brandenburgicum of 1572; Corpus Wilhelminum of 1576; and Corpus Julium of 1576.

[4] The Swabian-Saxon Concord and The Maulbronn Formula.

[5] Named after a small place, Bergen.

The Formula of Concord is the last book in the collection. It contains two sections,[1] and tries to settle divergencies which exist. On the one hand it rejects several teachings of Melanchton; on the other hand it rejects gnesio-Lutheran ideas as going far beyond Luther.

About two-thirds of all Lutherans accepted the Formula of Concord and the Book of Concord as confessional. However, there still remained about one-third of the Lutherans; the book was rejected especially by groups in northern Germany and by Denmark. Some other churches, especially in Western and Southern Germany, became Reformed. In "Corpus Doctrinae" written by churches not accepting the whole Book of Concord, we will still find smaller or larger parts of the book as confessional writings. In later years some churches accepted the whole Book of Concord,[2] but for the rest, the difference in agreement about confessional writings is maintained.[3]

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[1] The "Epitome" and the "Solida repetitio et declaratio." Both parts have twelve articles; the second part repeating to a greater length those stated in the first: original sin, free will; justification by faith; good works; law and Gospel; third use of the law; the Lord's Supper; the person of Christ; Christ's descent into hell; church usages and ceremonies called adiaphora; God's election; several heresies and sects.

[2] Sweden accepted the whole Book of Concord as confessional as late as 1893.

[3] Cf. Chap. IV, C, concerning Lutheran churches in the United States.

As for confession and absolution, the Formula of Concord does not add much to what was earlier taught in the other parts of the Book of Concord. Only once, and then almost incidentally, it repeats what we understand is accepted by all:

> "For that reason also, as the Augsburg Confession states in Article XI we retain individual absolution and teach that it is God's command that we 'believe this absolution and firmly hold that when we believe the word of absolution we are as truly reconciled with God as if we had heard a voice from heaven,' as the Apology explains this article."[1]

REMARKS

1. The statements in the Augsburg Confession and the Apology, both written by Melanchton, must never be separated from the Lutheran principle "Sola Fide." Faith in Christ is at the center of the Gospel, and therefore, also at the center of absolution. This is said without any possibility of misunderstanding in the Augsburg Confession, Art. IV:

> "JUSTIFICATION:
> It is also taught among us that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God by our own merits, works or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith . . . ."[2]

Throughout the other articles in the Augsburg Confession, faith in Christ is the leading principle as opposed to merits, satisfactions, good deeds, etc.[3] This view is also the main principle in the Apology, and is understood as entirely different from the Papal Church, "They pretend that the sacrament grants grace ex opere operato, without a right attitude in the recipient, and they do not mention faith, which grasps the absolution and consoles the conscience."[1] Absolution can only be received in faith.

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[1] B.C., Formula of Concord,"Solid Declaration," Art. XI, "Election," p. 622.

[2] B.C., Augsburg Confession, Art. IV, "Justification,"p. 30.

[3] Cf. Articles V, VI, VII, VIII, XII, XIII, XV, XVII, XX, XXI, XXV and XXVI.

> "Though the scholastics have said nothing at all about faith in their treatment of the doctrine of penitence, yet we think that none of our opponents are so mad as to deny that absolution is the spoken Gospel. Absolution should be received by faith, to cheer the terrified consciences."[2]

This opinion is held to be Biblical:

> "That only faith can accept the absolution can be proved from Paul, who teaches in Romans 4:16 that only faith accepts a promise. Now, since absolution is the promise of the forgiveness of sins, it necessarily requires faith. We do not see how anyone can be said to receive absolution unless he believes it. What else is the refusal to believe absolution but the accusation that God is a liar?"[3]

The same can be said for the other confessional books, three of which are written by Luther. Absolution is never mechanical, ex opere operato, but is only accepted in faith.

2. When the term "absolution" is used in the confessional books, it may mean forgiveness offered in the preaching of the Gospel, in the Lord's Supper, in Baptism, in man's confession of sins to God alone; but generally, confession and absolution mean first an act of man (confession) and thereafter an act of God, declaring absolution through a servant of his.[4]

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[1] B.C., The Apology, Art. XII, "Penitence," p. 184.

[2] B.C., The Apology, Art IV, "Justification," pp. 147f.

[3] Ibid., Art. XII, "Penitence," p. 190.

[4] Cf. Luther's definition in his Small Catechism, B.C., pp. 349f.

Public and general confession followed by general absolution were only seldom practiced at the time of the Reformation.[1] However, the Roman Catholic auricular confession was widely known. Luther was strongly opposed to it. His opposition was directed against the sacrament of penance (with contrition, confession, absolution, satisfaction), against the compulsory confession, against confession of all sins, against this "tyranny" executed by the Church. He was not opposed to man's confession of sin to another man, followed by his declared absolution. This had to be voluntary confession; it was unnecessary to mention all sins; but it was a great comfort and help.[2]

Thus we have to maintain that the terms "confession and absolution" in the Book of Concord usually refer to private confession and private absolution (in this dissertation referred to as Private Confession).[3]

CONCLUSION

In the brief analysis of the Book of Concord, we have seen that some of it was written in the context of political conflict, such as the Augsburg Confession, the Apology, the Smalcald Articles, and the Treatise. Others such as the Small and Large Catechisms have a more practical goal. The Formula of Concord was a result of internal, confessional struggle.

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[1] Cf. Chap. III, D.

[2] Cf. Chap. III, C.

[3] The term "Private Confession," includes private confession and private absolution, cf. supra, p. 2, note 3.

It is necessary to keep these facts in mind, because one of the consequences is that some topics within Lutheran doctrines are discussed in detail while other topics which are of equal importance, are only briefly mentioned.

Confession and absolution are not omitted in any document. In the more doctrinal writings, evangelical confession and absolution are discussed as opposed to Roman Catholic practice and teaching without neglecting to stress their importance. In the "practical" writings (the two catechisms) the front against the Papal Church is all but forgotten. Instead, children, grownups, and pastors are taught about the value of confession and absolution, and urged to use them.

In referring to what is discussed and quoted, we are forced to conclude with the following statement: Teaching and practice of Private Confession have a strong confessional basis in Lutheranism and, insofar as the confessional writings are significant in Lutheran teaching, it seems evident that the practice has to be taken seriously.

CHAPTER II

LUTHER AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The break which Luther hoped to avoid with Rome proved inevitable. There were several causes for the break, many of which were connected with our concern, Private Confession. Keeping this in mind, we shall have to deal with Luther's evaluation of soul-care, the theology upon which this was built, and the attacks he, therefore, made on the Papal Church. These attacks seem to focus especially in the Roman sacrament of penance.

A. The Concern for the Care of Souls.

1. Soul-care as an Issue in the Reformation.

When asked what were the new views which were brought forward in the Reformation, one may point to opinions of indulgence, sacraments, God's acts of grace, sin, tradition, the Bible, and theology as a whole. Much work was done by the Reformers in this connection. But the Reformation may be regarded first of all as a rebirth of the Biblical view of man in his relation to God and his fellowmen. Luther, standing before the court in Worms, had gained an understanding of man's soul when he said: "Unless I shall be convinced by the testimonies of the Scripture or by clear reason, ... My conscience is captured in the Word of God. I neither can nor will make any retraction, since it is neither safe nor honorable to act against conscience . . . ."[1]

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[1] New SH, Vol. VII, p. 72.

Strong indications have been given to claim that the Reformation was caused by politics, philosophy, historical developments, or by other human factors of the time. However, much more than these, the Reformation was a result of a man's concern for his own soul, and his demand for the right to stand personally before God. Luther saw that no man was a saint, but that every man was a sinner. Often man was in great trouble:

> "The same fearful torture of conscience is caused also by the committal of other atrocious sins, and similar feelings are experienced when sadness of soul takes hold of those who have done them. For to such people all creatures seem to have changed. Even when they speak to persons whom they know and hear them reply, the very sound of their voices seems to be different, the expression on their faces seems changed. In whichever direction these sinners turn their eyes, all things look dark and horrible. So savage and destructive a beast is a guilty conscience. Unless such unfortunates get divine assistance, they are bound to take their own lives from despair, anguish and unbearable distress."[1]

God's help is central and the actions of the Church must always be submitted to this principle. Notwithstanding doctrines and tradition, man can stand before God and his Word without a priest as mediator.

> "Luther's development shows that the Lutheran Reformation is not a result of his critique of doctrines; it is more than a religion of new church teaching. The starting point ("Ausgangspunkt") was the practical-religious question: when will you be sufficiently pious and have done enough so that you can receive a gracious God?"[2]

Luther never wrote a complete theory of the cure of souls, but his whole intention was this: as he himself had experienced salvation and freedom through faith, others too should have the same experience. The Word of God had to be available to everyone in his own language. Thus we may say that it was the pastoral theologian who translated the Bible; it was the soul-carer who turned to the Christian nobility, to mayors and counselors in all German towns, admonishing them to do their duty; and who but the soul-carer put the catechisms into the hands of house-fathers and teachers to make them capable of fulfilling their spiritual tasks.

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[1] W 42, 212 -- SL 1, 351.

[2] F. A. Loofs, Leitfaden zum Studium der Dogmengeschichte (4th ed.; Halle, 1906), p. 685. Quoted from Klaus Harms, op. cit., p. 9.

He personally became a soul-carer for many people during his years as a reformer. "Among those who appealed to him for help were needy widows and orphans, unemployed workers, underpaid clergymen, monks and nuns who had abandoned monastic life . . . , the imprisoned . . . , students . . . , the wronged . . . , rulers. . . , fellow clergymen."[1] Luther showed a variety of methods in his care of souls depending on the circumstances. Since the Word of God is given to men, soul-care will always have two centers, the Bible and the man. On this basis he would spare no effort to help. "Although he was concerned about all Christendom and many evangelical congregations, he never lost sight of the individual soul."[2]

Having this concern, he could use various means in soul-care. Counseling was important, and should include all human problems. Practical arrangements often had to be made.[3]

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[1] Theodore G. Tappert, Luther: Letters of Spiritual Counsel (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1955), p. 21.

[2] Charles F. Kemp, Physicians of the Soul (New York: Macmillan, 1947), p. 40.

[3] For example: Luther married Katherine because he could not find another for her.

However, the question of man's eternal soul and his salvation was far more important, and counseling never lost this aspect. Thus the reading of Scriptures, preaching, teaching the Word of God, administering the sacraments, conducting services, and administering church discipline became the main tasks in the care of souls. In addition to these, he greatly recommended confession and absolution. Luther agreed upon using General Confession,[1] but in the private care of souls he stressed the blessings of Private Confession.[2]

The responsibility for soul-care belonged to the congregation, and thus to every Christian member. They are the priesthood of believers constituting the Church. Common church order demands that the congregation chooses a pastor to administer the sacraments, to preach, to teach, and to perform other duties. He is then rightly called ("rite vocatus").

> "A pastor exercises the office of the keys, baptizes, preaches, administers the Sacrament, and performs other offices by which he serves the congregation, not of his own accord but on the behalf of the congregation. For he is a servant of the entire congregation to which the key is given though he be a rascal. For if he is acting instead of the congregation, then the church is acting. If the church is acting, then God is acting; for one must have a servant."[3]

The service performed by the pastor in this respect, is performed publicly in the congregation:

> "Now perhaps I shall hear the question: I may, then, hear confession, baptize, preach, administer the

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[1] Cf. infra, p. 116. In the United States "General Confession" is usually called "Public Confession."

[2] Cf. infra, p. 105.

[3] W 17 II 452 -- SL II, 2304.

> Sacrament of the Altar? No, St. Paul says: 'Let all things be done decently and in order' (I Cor. 14:40). If everybody wanted to hear confession, to baptize, to administer the Sacraments, how unseemly that would be! Again, if everybody desired to preach, who would listen? If we were all to preach at the same time, what a confused chattering that would be, such as you now hear among the frogs! Therefore it should be thus: the congregation chooses a suitable person, who administers the Sacrament, preaches, hears confession, and baptizes. To be sure, all of us possess this power; but none except he who is chosen by the congregation to do so should presume to practice it publicly."[1]

However, appointing a pastor never excuses the lay members from responsibility. In private he should be concerned: "In private I certainly may use this power. If, for instance, my neighbor comes and says: My friend, I am burdened in conscience; speak a word of absolution to me, then I am at liberty to do so. But in private, I say this must be done."[2]

Normally a person seeks the minister when in trouble, but there should be no objections if another Christian is chosen:

> "If the matter is so repulsive that one is ashamed to confess it before the minister, let him confide in some other Christian and pious person, whoever he may be, whose faith is apparent. To him let them complain, about what is distressing them and troubling their conscience, and let them seek his advice by telling him: Oh my brother, advise my disturbed and afflicted conscience lest I die in my sins. Either from the minister or from someone else, he will be raised up and take comfort, and his heart, torn by the missiles of the devil, will be healed."[3]

Let no one believe this an easy task. Every member has to put his whole heart and effort into helping another:

> "No one can tell or believe how difficult it is to raise up and revive a despairing heart and a conscience

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[1] W 10 I, 2239f -- SL II, 745f.

[2] Loc. cit.

[3] W 44, 221 -- SL 2, 1002f.

> that is steeped in sadness. Those who are without temptation find it easy to be full of joy. But this is work, this is labor: to bring him who lies there, depressed by spiritual sadness and sorrow, back to a recognition of divine goodness and grace and to faith in them."[1]

The challenge of soul-care is ever present and is a task to be fulfilled by all members of the church. As soon as help is needed, any Christian must assist his neighbor: "No one may forsake his neighbor when he is in trouble. Everybody is under obligation to help and support his neighbor as he would himself like to be helped."[2]

2. Theology and Soul-care.

Since soul-care is one of Luther's main concerns, the care of souls can never be seen apart from his theology. They are completely interwoven with one another. "Luther's teaching about penance is intimately tied to his whole theology."[3] "Pastoral care [In Luther's teaching] is a natural expression of theology."[4] "An examination of the collected works of Luther makes it clear that his spiritual counsel was not simply the application of external technique. It was part and parcel of his theology."[5] Similar statements can be quoted from almost every treatment of Luther's pastoral theology. To attempt a thorough discussion of his theology is beyond the intention of this dissertation. Furthermore, Luther-research[1] is still going on, and there is a long way to go before the church finds answers to many proposed questions. However, some aspects of Luther's theological thinking must be discussed since they are directly connected with soul-care. For our purposes it seems inevitable to state a few of his theological ideas about the Church, man, grace, faith, justification and forgiveness.

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[1] W 44, 598 -- SL 2, 1685.

[2] Tappert, op. cit., p. 233.

[3] Lindberg, op.cit., p. 78.

[4] David Belgum, "The Theology of Pastoral Care," The Lutheran Quarterly (1959), pp. 207-221.

[5] Tappert, op. cit., p. 21.

(a) The Church is "communio sanctorum," the communion of saints. Thus the Church's nature is invisible, consisting of those who believe in Christ as the son of God. There are no boundaries or denominational limitations. ". . . the Christian Church, properly speaking, is nothing else than the assembly of all believers and saints. . . ."[2] Still Luther maintains that there exists a close connection between the invisible and visible Church. The Church can be seen, and has an organized side in that it is "the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel. . . ."[3] "The Church is a spiritual congregation hearing the voice of the shepherd, believing in him, and governed by him by the the Holy Spirit. Externally it is seen in having his word and sacraments, inwardly it is only known by Him."[1] The Church is built upon the word of God, and any organized function within the Church is a matter of order.

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[1] Cf. New S. H., XIV, 685f.

[2] Augsburg Confession, Art. VIII.

[3] Augsburg Confession, Art. VII.

(b) Luther views man and his nature pessimistically. Repeatedly he returns to the subject of man resisting God's will. "It is taught among us that since the fall of Adam all men who are born according to the course of nature are conceived and born in sin. That is, all men are full of evil lust and inclinations from the mother's womb and are unable by nature to have true fear of God and true faith in God. . . ."[2] This quotation from the Augsburg Confession covers his view as a whole. In two books, however, Luther has developed more complete statements. De servo arbitrio (The Bondage of the Will)[3] is about natural man, On the Liberty of a Christian[4]; about Christian man.

The natural man's will is basically opposed to the will of God. Man's motivation is never love to God, and in relation to him, man is nothing but a sinner. This does not mean that natural man is forced to do something against his wishes, but he voluntarily desires what is opposed to God. It is against his nature to do anything else. "The mind of the flesh is hostility to God, because it does not submit to God's law, and it cannot" (Romans 8:7). Motivation for man's acts and desires is in essence egotistical.

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[1] J. C. Peterson, "Luthers syn paa kirken," Vaar Lutherske Tro, ed. by Sigurd Normann (Oslo: Norges Lutherlags Forlag, 1937), p. 190.

[2] Augsburg Confession, Art. II.

[3] W 18 -- SL 18, written 1525.

[4] W 7 -- SL 15, written 1520.

However, within the natural field, man has his freedom. He may choose what to do. He may live an honest and ethical life. Relatively speaking, natural man may possess desirable qualities. Absolutely speaking, in his relationship to a holy God, he is a sinner and thoroughly sinful.

As opposed to "natural man" Luther sets "Christian man." He is a man who, by faith, has accepted Christ as his Savior. His personality has quite another attitude than that of the "natural man." He longs to live in accordance with the will of God, this desire he has because he is reborn--because something new is created within him. Luther regards regeneration as "donatio fidei," i.e., the faith which justifies is given to man by God. This new creation in man is not improvement of natural man, but a part of God's divine nature given to man.[1]

(c) Grace. The change from natural man to Christian man can in no way be made by man himself. This takes place by God's grace. "As far as our own abilities are concerned, there is no difference whatsoever between us; but the grace of God alone causes us to differ."[2] "Sola Gratia," grace alone, became one of the main terms in Luther's theology.

To gain better understanding of grace in Luther's terminology, his concepts of law and gospel should be mentioned. Man meets God's law in the Scripture and preaching as well as in nature. It teaches him that God is Lord, what the true nature of man is, and thus what sin is. Man understands that sin is not primarily an act, but a state in which he lives. "The law is the thunderbolt by means of which God with one blow destroys both open sinners and false saints. He allows no one to justify himself. He drives all together into terror and despair. This is the hammer of which Jeremiah speaks, '. . . is not my word like a hammer which breaks the rock in pieces?' (Jer. 23:29). This is not activa contritio (artificial remorse), but passiva contritio (true sorrow of the heart, suffering and pain of death)."[1] Therefore Luther is concerned more about "my sin" than he is about "my sins." Met by the law man may either revolt against God, or admit that God is right. In the latter case the law is God's voice judging him as a sinner and man accepts this judgment. Judging man according to the law is not, however, the main act of God. He is first of all a loving God. In love he created the world, and in love he desires to recall his fallen creation. This is heard from the gospel, and this is grace.

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[1] II Peter 1:4.

[2] W 15, 483 -- SL 11, 584f. From a sermon 1524.

> "By 'Law' we should understand nothing but God's Word and command in which He commands us what we are to do and not to do and demands our obedience or service. . . . The Gospel is such a doctrine or Word of God as does not demand our works or command us to do anything, but bids us simply receive the offered grace of the forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation and be satisfied to have it given us as a present."[2]

Luther expressed it even stronger in another connection:

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[1] B.C., Smalcald Articles, p. 304.

[2] W 36, 30f. -- SL 9, 802f.

> "According to the apostle, Rom. 1:1-3f, the Gospel is the message about the incarnate Son of God, who was given us without our merits for salvation and peace. It is the Word of salvation, the Word of grace, the Word of comfort, the Word of joy, the voice of the Bridegroom and the Bride, the good Word, the Word of peace, as Isaiah says: 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good.' (52:7) But the Law is the Word of perdition, the Word of Wrath, the Word of sadness, the Word of pain, the voice of the Judge and the accused, the Word of unrest, the Word of malediction; for, according to the apostle, the Law is the strength of sin (I Cor. 15:56), the Law works wrath (Rom. 4:15), and it is a Law of death (Rom. 7:13)."[1]

In sola gratia Luther found the cause for salvation, and in sola gratia he found also the acting power of salvation without any merit and cooperation from man. God's grace is, in Luther's opinion, "his personal, gracious love to his fallen creation, made alive and revealed in Christ."[2] As he writes himself: "Grace signifies that favor with which God receives us, forgiving our sins and justifying us freely (gratis) through Christ."[3]

(d) Faith. A year later Luther almost repeated himself: "According to the usage of the Scripture, grace signifies that favor of God which wishes us well and justifies us. That is, it freely grants us the faith which alone justifies us."[4] Sola fide, faith alone is another of Luther's main terms. By grace God accepts man, and man receives this acceptance through faith. He can gain no merit; he can add nothing to himself.

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[1] W 1, 616 -- SL 18, 249f.

[2] K.E. Skydsgaard, Ja og Nei--Til Forstaaelse mellom katolisisme og protestantisme (Copenhagen 1953, and Land og Kirke, Oslo, 1954), p. 131.

[3] W 40 II, 21 -- SL 5, 573. Exposition of Psalm 51, 1522.

[4] W 11, 302 -- SL 18, 590.

Modern Lutheran theology may be able to show changes and contradictions in Luther's teaching.[1] Without a doubt his view still agrees with the one stated in the Augsburg Confession, Article IV: ". . . we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life given to us. For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness, as Paul says in Romans 3:21-26 and 4:5."

Therefore, faith is not a work of man, but faith, as well as grace, is a gift from God. It is not faith to believe certain doctrines, but it is faith to believe the very gospel preached within the Church. This is proclaimed to man in the Word: "The Word and faith should stand together, for the one cannot exist without the other."[2] "There is no other way or means whereby we come to faith than by hearing, learning, and considering the Gospel."[3] The content of the gospel is Christ, and he it is who is also the object of faith.

(e) Justification. The result of God's grace and faith is justification of man. "For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law (Romans 3:28), and again that he (God) himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus (Romans 3:26)."[4] Luther regarded this article so important that nothing "can be given up or compromised even if heaven and earth and things temporal should be destroyed."[1] Justification is in Luther's terminology built on his understanding of Paul, i.e., justification is declarative: to declare one for just. "By the one solid rock which we call the doctrine of justification we mean that we are redeemed from sin, death, and the devil and are made partakers of life eternal."[2] "The article of justification, which is our only protection, not only against all the powers and plottings of men, but also against the gates of hell, is this: by faith alone (sola fide) in Christ, without works, are we declared just and saved."[3] Thus justification is to be regarded as a judging act of God in which he does not condemn man, but declared him to be without guilt for the sake of Christ. This is the chief article in Christianity, "the article of justification is the master and prince, the lord, the ruler, and the judge over all kinds of doctrines";[4] it is so important that "it can never be exhausted by study."[5]

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[1] Cf. Olaf Moe, "Rettferdiggjørelsen ved troen alene." Thesis in Normann, Vaar Lutherske Arv, op. cit., p. 114.

[2] W 52, 498. From a sermon on Matthew 9:1-8.

[3] W 46, 583 -- SL 7, 1595. A sermon on John 1:6-7 in 1537.

[4] Luther's Smalcald Articles, Part II, Article I.

Justification of man does not mean that the power of sin is defeated. Living on earth and having his inheritance, the Christian man is simul iustus et peccator, at the same time just and sinner. He is justified in Christ, but as a sinner he needs daily forgiveness.

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[1] Loc. cit.

[2] W 40 I, 33 -- SL 9,9. From his lectures on Galatians, 1531.

[3] W 40 I, 355 -- SL 9, 296.

[4] W 39 I, 205.

[5] W 40 II, 419 -- SL 5, 571. An exposition of Ps. 51:9.

(f) Forgiveness. God's justification includes his forgiveness of all sins. It is here we have reached the very heart of the gospel and of Luther's teaching. From the earliest days in his reformation until his death he taught, preached, wrote, and lived in this new knowledge of God's forgiveness. "The forgiveness of the guilt does not rest upon the contrition of the sinner nor upon the office or power of the priest. Rather it rests on faith which clings to the Word of Christ."[1] These sentences written in 1518 show that he connects forgiveness with the Word. The Word is found not only in preaching, but in several acts of the Church: "Learn that you find the forgiveness of sins nowhere but in the Word. The Word, however, you find in Baptism, in the Lord's Supper, in absolution, and in the sermon; therefore the forgiveness of sins is there too. And woe the person who speaks a different language!"[2] In forgetting the teaching about forgiveness, our religion dare not pretend to be Christian. "Christianity is nothing but the constant practicing of this passage . . . and [this article of forgiveness] embraces almost all the other theological doctrines. . . ."[3]

The Word and the proclamation of the Word are fundamental in Luther. In reading and preaching the Scripture, the Word offers forgiveness of sins and consequently salvation. The Word is also found in the sacraments and the absolution. "Baptism is not water only, but it is water used with God's word and by his command," Luther starts the fourth part of his Small Catechism. In answer to the question: "What does God give in Baptism?" he writes: "In Baptism God forgives sin, delivers from death and the devil, and gives everlasting salvation to all who believe what he has promised." Going on to the second sacrament, the Holy Communion, Luther speaks in similar terms: "The benefits of this sacrament are pointed out by the words, 'given and shed for you for the remission of sins.' These words assure us that in the sacrament we receive forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation."[1]

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[1] W 1, 630 -- SL 9, 761f.

[2] W 52, 504 -- SL 12 a, 924f. From a sermon, 1533, on Matthew 9:1-8.

[3] W 25, 331 -- SL 6, 625. Comments on Isaiah 53 in 1532.

Forgiveness of sins is the same as absolution. Preachers may proclaim it from the pulpit, or it may be offered in the sacraments. However, in all these acts, God is the one offering absolution:

> "To preach forgiveness of sins means nothing else than to absolve and loose from sins. This is done also in Baptism and in the Sacrament of the Altar, for these were likewise ordained to exhibit the forgiveness of sin to us and to assure us of it. Therefore being baptized or receiving the Sacrament of the Altar is also an absolution. Here forgiveness is promised and awarded each person in particular in the name and at the command of Christ. You should hear this absolution, when and as often as you are in need of it and should accept and believe it as if you were hearing it from Christ himself. For since it is not our absolution, but Christ's command and Word, it is just as good and effective as if you were hearing out of his own mouth."[2]

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[1] The quotations from Luther's Small Catechism follow the new American translation suggested by the Intersynodical Catechism Committee, printed 1960.

[2] W 21, 263 -- SL 11, 722.

Thus there are great similarities in preaching, Baptism, and the Holy Communion for they all offer forgiveness of sins. One may then ask why Luther still recommends using absolution as a special act.[1] His conviction is expressed succinctly in a sermon from 1531:

> "Absolution is nothing else than the preaching and proclaiming of the forgiveness of sins, which Christ here commands us both to preach and to hear. But because it is necessary to preserve such preaching in the church, absolution, too, should be retained. For there is only this difference between the two: While through preaching the Gospel we publish this forgiveness everywhere and tell it to all in general, in absolution we tell it specifically to one or more desiring it."[2]

Luther's concern for soul-care and the theology which forms its basis cannot be disregarded in the understanding of the Reformation. God's absolution offered in the various contexts of the Word occupied Luther's thinking and acting, and perhaps was never expressed more clearly than in a sermon given when he was in his middle forties: "If the great, sublime article called the forgiveness of sins is correctly understood, it makes one a genuine Christian and gives one eternal life. This is the very reason why it must be taught in Christendom with unflagging diligence and without ceasing, so that people may learn to understand it plainly, clearly, discriminatingly. For to do so is the one, supreme, and most difficult task of Christians. As long as we live here below, we shall have enough to do to learn this article. No one need look for anything new, anything higher and better."[3]

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[1] Cf. infra, point C.

[2] W 21, 262f -- SL 11, 721. In the Smalcald Articles, he repeats the same in even clearer terms. Cf. BC., p. 310.

[3] W 29, 562 -- SL 11, 1724.

B. Attack on the Roman Church.

From his theological understanding of Biblical soul-care with its center in God's forgiveness (absolution), and from the development within the Roman Church, Luther had to lance heavy attacks on the Church in which he was an ordained priest. His actions took several directions. He was utterly uncompromising in the field of confession and absolution, i.e., the Roman sacrament of penance. The Catholic Church had a theology and practice in this connection which, of course, were inseparable. Consequently, Luther's attacks were directed both against the practice of penance, and the theology behind it. Almost every theological concept and act within the Roman Church had some connection with the sacrament of penance since the doctrine of this sacrament was a result of the whole theological structure and historical development within the Church.[1] Therefore, only a selection of conflicting terms can be chosen, and it seems that the mose important ones are sin and grace; merits, indulgences, contrition, confession, absolution, satisfaction and the Church. The first three terms must be mentioned because they are important in the "sacrament of penance," the next four terms are concerning the different the different parts of penance, and the last one about the institution behind the doctrines and practices.

1. Sin and Grace.

"Sin is every thought, word or deed against eternal law,"[2] sin is a defect in man which can only be healed by communication of divine grace[1] offered in the sacraments. This probably covers the basic view of the Catholic Church. In the absolution spoken by the priest, man is freed from his sins. On behalf of God, the priest gives his judgment; God accepts the penance and through the sacrament gives him the power of grace. The juridical aspect is dominating. "Every law must have a sanction attached to its non-observance. A sin against the moral order of God must necessarily be punished by God."[2] If man knows he is acting against the will of God, his sin is a peccata mortalis, a mortal sin. In addition the Catholic Church has several kinds of sins,[3] but in essence they all violate God's honor for which some punishment or compensation has to be made.

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[1] Cf. supra, pp. 17-25.

[2] George D. Smith, The Teaching of the Catholic Church (1947), p. 923, quoted from Lindberg, op. cit., p. 57.

Luther did not accept this doctrine. Sin is not only a defect in man, but a part of man's nature. Christ atoned once and for all, and thus God has forgiven all sins. Something new is created in man as soon as he believes in this forgiveness. "God wants to forgive sins to those who acknowledge them. . . . This promise is the sole reason and the first, intermediate, and ultimate reason, that is, it is everything in justification."[4]

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[1] Cf. Lindberg, op. cit., p. 55.

[2] G. D. Smith, op. cit., p. 931, quoting from Lindberg, op. cit., p. 57.

[3] For example:
Peccata mortalia, gravia, venialia
Peccata spiritualia et carnalia
Peccata cordis, oris, operis
Peccata propria et aliena
Peccata adversus Deum, proximum, seipsum.

[4] W 40 II, 359f -- SL 5, 515, written in 1532.

As long as man has not accepted Christ, he is under the power of the Devil; as soon as he is a Christian, God is his Lord.

Both Catholic and Lutheran theology agree that the new status of man takes place by God's grace. The agreement goes only so far, and the understanding of grace is entirely different. According to Roman theology God's grace is a power which can be given or communicated to man. Thomas teaches that man has a double goal, one natural and one supernatural. To reach his natural goal he must be free to use his reason, his abilities, his will. The supernatural goal is to lift these natural abilities above himself to God. Only grace can do this. "Grace," says Thomas, "is a certain perfection which elevates the soul to a certain supernatural being."[1] Without this grace man can never reach any destination.

Luther's understanding is different: Grace is nothing but the love of God to his whole creation, made alive in Christ. God's grace does not take something in man to lift it up; God creates something entirely different. This is solely an act of God in which man can do nothing.

This brings us into the next field of conflict.

2. Merits.

The whole idea of merits was opposed by Luther, but it was and is defended by the Roman Church. Man's will may be very weak, but by God's strengthening of the will, man may reach the stage where he can gain merit. "The just man deserves--

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[1] De Veritate, p. 27, a 2. "Gratia est quaedam perfectio elevans animam ad quoddam esse supernaturale."

through his good works--an increase of grace, the eternal life, and an increase of honor."[1] "The just man deserves truly--through his good deeds--a supernatural reward by God."[2] For this kind of merit the term Meritum de condigno is used meaning that the just man has the right to receive rewards. There is also another merit, namely Meritum de congruo which does not give man the right to claim grace, but he is prepared to receive the justifying grace.

From his understanding of man's nature, justification, grace, and faith,[3] Luther attacked the teaching of merits. In his writings and sermons he used harsh words and strong expressions both against the doctrines and the men (especially the Pope) defending this doctrine. "With God nothing has any standing but grace. If the Turks, the Jews, and the Pope apprehended this through Christ, they would be saved. But now they are blinded, reject grace, and stand on their right and merit. . . ."[4] "You have not merited the Gospel or Christ or Baptism; but it is purely a gift, freely given. Our sins are forgiven free, and we become God's children and are put into heaven without any contribution on our part."[5] Thus Luther rejected the whole idea of human merit, "There is no such thing as merit; but all who are justified are justified for nothing."[6]

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[1] Bernh. Bartmann, Dogmatik, II (1932), p. 122. Quoted from Lindberg, op. cit., p. 52.

[2] Franz Diekamp, Katholische Dogmatik, II (1937), 555.

[3] Cf. supra, pp. 65-70.

[4] W 43, 167 -- SL 1, 1420. Exposition of Genesis 21.

[5] W 32, 538 -- SL 7, 669f. Discourse on Matthew 5-7, 1532.

[6] W 18, 769 -- SL 18, 1937. From Bondage of the Will.

3. Indulgences.

From the same starting point he attacked the teaching of indulgences: "Listen to this: For Christ alone it is proper to help and save others with His merits and works. The works of others are of benefit to no one, not to themselves either; for the statement stands: 'The just shall live by faith.'"[1] According to Roman Catholic definition indulgences are: "the remission of the temporal punishment due to God for sins already forgiven as to guilt; a remission granted by ecclesiastical authority to the faithful, from the treasury of the superabundant satisfactory merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, of Mary most holy, and of the saints."[2] A man might be forgiven by God for his offences, but temporal punishment remains. This must be suffered either here or in purgatory. By prayer, fasting, giving of alms, by doing more than claimed, the punishment could be shortened. Further it was taught, and finally accepted after Thomas, that one man may make satisfaction for others. The Church had gained merits--merita ecclesiae satisfaciunt--by the work of Christ, of Mary, and of all other saints, and could offer these merits to other persons being in need of them.

At the time of Luther the use of indulgences had become an item for trade. Friar Tetzel and the jingle, "When in the chest the penny rings, the soul from the purgatory springs," are well known.[3] Men before Luther had prepared the battle. Both

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[1] W 8, 599 -- SL 19, 1544. From 1521.

[2] New S.H., V, 485.

[3] "sobald de Pfenning im Kasten klingt, Die Seele aus dem Fegfeuer springt."

John Wyclif and John Huss used strong words against the practice. Under Luther it became an item which could no longer be suppressed. Several times in 1516 and 1517, he preached against indulgences, and the official name on his Ninety-Five Theses put up in 1517 is "A Disputation for the Clarification of the Power of Indulgences."[1] His first thesis immediately clarifies his concern: "Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, when He said Poenitentiam agite, willed that the whole life of believers should be repentance."[2] Dated the same day, October 31, he wrote a letter to his Archbishop, Albrecht of Mainz, asking for removal of indulgence sales, and enclosed his thesis. In the letter he wrote:

> ". . . I grieve over the wholly false impression which the people have conceived from them; to wit--the unhappy souls believe that if they have purchased letters of indulgence they are sure of their salvation. . . again, that a man is free, through these indulgences, from all penalty and guilt. O God, most good. Thus souls committed to your care, good Father, are taught to their death, and the strict account, which you must render for all such, grows and increases. For this reason I have no longer been able to keep quiet about the matter. . . ."[3]

Luther certainly did not keep quiet, neither at this time nor in the future. Officially the Roman Church stopped selling indulgences at the Council of Trent, but the doctrine as such was kept. This is an expected consequence of the juridical understanding of forgiveness, and of the teaching of sin and grace. Similarly, the consequence of Luther's understanding of the same terms makes any agreement with his former church authorities impossible. He has the same basic attitude in criticizing the sacrament through which the Papal Church has its greatest influence and control of members, namely the sacrament of penance with the four parts in it: contrition, confession, absolution and satisfaction.[1]

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[1] 'Disputatio pro declaratione virtutis indulgentiarum,' written in Latin.

[2] W 1 -- SL 18. This translation quoted from Works of Martin Luther, op. cit., p. 29.

[3] Works of Martin Luther, op. cit., p. 26.

4. Contrition.

The differentiation between contrition and attrition as stated by Thomas and accepted by the Roman Church,[2] could not be accepted by Luther. Attrition, which is repentance caused by fear of punishment, has, according to Catholic view, no real value in itself. However, by coming to confession even with only attrition, God in his grace may change it into contrition which gains forgiveness. Thus some kind of contrition is necessary in man before he can receive absolution.

Luther admittedly will agree that real repentance is caused by love to God, and thus quite close to the basic meaning of the term contrition. But he cannot admit that proper contrition must be a condition for repentance. As early as 1518 he published some theses about guilt and punishment, and here he says: "Those err to the point of unbelief who assert that the forgiveness of guilt is uncertain because of the uncertainty of contrition. . . . Those who build forgiveness on contrition are building the faith of God on sand, that is, on the work of man."[3]

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[1] Cf. supra, p. 24.

[2] Cf. ibid.

[3] W 1, 631f -- SL 19, 762f. Theses 13 and 18.

His critique of the Roman teaching of contrition may be stated in four points.[1] Firstly, it is impossible for any man to have an absolute contrition: "I will say nothing now of the intolerable burden they have bound upon us with their demand that we should frame a contrition for every sin. That is impossible; we can know only the smaller part of our sins."[2] Secondly, Luther maintains that desire for confession and absolution should not be created by contrition. Man should rather turn away from his own misery, trusting something which exists beyond human *ratio*: "Beware of placing confidence in your contrition or of ascribing the forgiveness of sins to your own sorrow. For God does not favorably regard you because of contrition or sorrow, but because of the faith with which you have believed His threatenings and promises. . . ."[3] The third objection of Luther goes to the very heart of the matter for what he calls "The False Repentance of the Papists":[4]

> "It was impossible for them to teach correctly about repentance because they did not know what sin really is. For . . . they did not have the right teaching concerning original sin but asserted that the natural powers of man have remained whole and uncorrupted, that reason is capable of acting accordingly, and that God will assuredly grant his grace to the man who does as much as he can according to his free will."[5]

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[1] Cf. Erich Roth, *Die Privatbeichte und Schlüsselgewalt in der Theologie der Reformatoren* (Gutersloh: Bertelsmann Verlag, 1952), pp. 23f.

[2] W 6, 545, 16. The translation into English follows *Works of Martin Luther*, II (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press), p. 249. The passage is from *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, written 1520.

[3] W 6, 545, 25.

[4] *B.C., Smalcald Articles*, p. 304.

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 304f.

From this objection comes the fourth one, namely that God's gift of grace cannot be rightly accepted: ". . . seeking consolation in its own works. . .without being able to consider Christ and faith."[1]

True contrition, then, arises from faith in God. On the grounds that everything that is not of faith is sin (Romans 14: 23), contrition based on disgust of sin and fear of hell is hypocritical and a mere "gallow-contrition."[2]

5. Confession.

The Catholic Church teaches that every "mortal sin" has to be confessed to a priest. If a sin is forgotten, penance is still valid. However, if a man purposely omits mentioning such a sin, the whole sacrament has no value whatsoever. Venial sins do not have to be confessed in principle, but the fact that it is often is difficult to decide what is a venial and what a mortal sin makes it safe to confess them all. Further, merit and grace may be gained by doing so.[3]

Luther attacks this theology and practice from the first years of the Reformation, and he does not recant in later years:

> "In the papacy I so tortured and spoiled myself by confessing and making satisfaction that I looked for foreign sin, which I had not committed; because of my remorse I never had any rest nor a clear and peaceful heart. I still cannot get rid of this doctrine. It will harm me as long as I live."[4]

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 306.

[2] Quoted from McNeill, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

[3] Cf. Lindberg, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

[4] W 47, 441 -- SL 7, 1135. Exposition in 1538.

As in contrition, his main argument against the Catholic Church is that confession should earn grace, and that faith is forgotten:

> "Everybody had to give an account of all his sins, an impossibility and the source of great torture . . . . The more completely he confessed . . . the more he abased himself before the priest, the sooner and the better he would make satisfaction for his sins, for such humiliation would surely earn grace before God. Here, again, there was neither faith nor Christ."[1]

His other strong line of offense against Rome is the compulsory confession to a priest.[2] In some statements Luther published in 1518, he objects to the required recitation of all sins in the confessional. Such a requirement only creates despair.[3] Two years later he wrote in another book[4] that remission of sins rests not upon any formal confession but upon the love of God. Secret sins need not be told to a priest. In a more important book from the same year, The Babylonian Captivity he says that the Papal Church has utterly abolished the sacrament of penance, and turned it into "tyranny."[5] This thought is followed in still another publication which is entirely concerned about compulsory confession.[1] Luther warns against the "Papal penance," called "compulsory confession." In this the clergy makes an arbitrary banning, and God just does not hear it! All sins need not be revealed, and if one prefers to confess to another person, the confession may be made to a fellow Christian just as well as to any priest or clergyman.

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[1] Book of Concord, Smalcald Articles, p. 306.

[2] Cf. supra, pp.21f.where the canon law from Trent is quoted.

[3] Resolutions of the Disputations on the Power of Indulgences, written to clarify some misunderstanding of his 95 theses. W 1 -- SL 18.

[4] Confitenti ratio (Methods of Confessing) which is a Latin revision of a German booklet from 1519: Brief Instruction on How One Should Confess One's Sins. W 2 -- SL 10.

[5] Martin Luther, Prelude on the Babylonian Captivity of the Church. W 6 -- SL 19.

Finally he disagrees with the law that everybody must go to confession at least once a year. Confession to man is voluntary.[2]

6. Absolution.

Only ordained persons can absolve sins according to Roman doctrine.[3] The validity of absolution depends upon complete confession of all mortal sins, and further that satisfaction[4] is made according to the decision of the confessor.

In Defense of All the Articles of Martin Luther Which Have Been Condemned by the Recent Bull of Leo X,[5] Luther stated that the three parts of penance, namely contrition, confession, and satisfaction, have no Biblical background. Absolution said by bishop, priest, or by anybody else is without value if not accepted in faith. The priest is not a judge who can give a conditional absolution: "They [the father confessors] frightened us by their conditional absolution: I absolve you through the merit of our Lord Jesus Christ because of the contrition of your heart, the confession of your mouth, the satisfaction of your works, and the intercession of the saints, etc. This condition caused all the mischief."[1] Absolution, when received in faith, cannot fail and is not dependent upon any authority but God.

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[1] On Confession, Whether the Pope Has the Authority to Demand It. W 8 -- SL 19, 5, written in 1521.

[2] Cf. infra, pp. 109f.

[3] Cf. infra, p. 88.

[4] Cf. infra, p. 86.

[5] W 7 -- SL 15, written 1521.

> "The Pope taught: I absolve you from all your sins if you have sufficiently repented of them; then this absolution is valid; but if you have not sufficiently repented of them, it is invalid . . . . You must be armed against this heresy and know that what God says and does is certain. For instance, when He says: Your sins are forgiven you in the name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the power of the keys does not err."[2]

Absolution may be given by a man, but he only does so on behalf of God. This man may be dishonest and disbelieving in what he says. However, the absolution still is valid!

> "What if the priest were in error? For not on the priest but on the Word of Christ rests the forgiveness. Therefore, though the priest may be doing it [absolving] in order to obtain profit or honor, only see to it that you honestly desire forgiveness and believe Christ, who is making the promise. Nay, even if he were to absolve in frivolousness, you nonetheless obtain peace by your faith."[3]

Thus again Luther stresses the importance of faith in absolution. Without faith any forgiveness is not accepted, with faith absolution is given by God whether it takes place in the sacraments, in hearing or reading the Word, in praying, or in the special institution of private or public confession and absolution.

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[1] W-T, No. 6017.

[2] W 47, 334 -- SL 7, 993f.

[3] W 1, 542f. -- SL 18, 123ff.

7. Satisfaction.

Satisfaction in the Catholic Church is of two kinds. The one was made by Christ through his holy passion. His satisfaction was made to God, and includes all sins by men committed before Baptism or afterwards deserving eternal punishment. The temporal punishment, however, still remains. The other kind of satisfaction is connected to this punishment: A man has to make satisfaction by punishment which is voluntarily undertaken, or inflicted by Christ, or by a priest in accordance with the quality of the sin. The goal of this kind of satisfaction is to reduce the punishment in Purgatory.[1] Thus the teaching of satisfaction is closely related to the doctrines of indulgences,[2] and the objections Luther had in that connection also apply to satisfaction. As has been mentioned above,[3] the validity of the priest's absolution is dependent upon the confessee's fulfilling of the satisfactions. Finally it should be added that satisfactions have an intention which goes beyond that of avoiding punishment: It is a promotion in state of grace.[4]

Luther is entirely opposed to this teaching. Again he returns to faith and the grace of God. "If the satisfaction could have been perfect, full confidence would have been placed on it, and neither faith nor Christ would have been of any value."[1] In a strong letter to the clergy assembled in Augsburg in 1530, he says: ". . . When you say: You must render satisfaction for your sin, what is that but saying: You must deny Christ, renounce your Baptism, blaspheme the Gospel, accuse God of lying, disbelieve the forgiveness of sin . . . , and go to heaven with virtues such as these by your own efforts?"[2]

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[1] Cf. New S.H., X, 209. The statement is in harmony with definition given by J. S. Hunter, Outlines of Dogmatic Theology, III, 334-337.

[2] Cf. *supra*, pp. 78ff.

[3] Cf. *supra*, p. 84.

[4] "Satisfactio confert gratiam, prout est in propositio, et auget eam, prout est in executione." Thomas S. th. III, qu. 90 a.2 ad 2. Quoted from Roth, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

Satisfaction understood as good words and deeds can do nothing to gain salvation or avoid punishment. Optima poenitentia nova vita!"[3] A new life is the only important penance, and it can be given only by God's forgiveness and grace, received in faith. This does not mean that Luther considered good works unimportant. They must follow as a result of the new life given man in Christ. However, these deeds are never perfect and rather stress dependence on God. Man is simul iustus et peccator. The status he has as a Christian is a status where his own effort means nothing. As Luther writes in his Small Catechism, the explanation to the third article: "I believe that I cannot by my own understanding or effort believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and kept me in true faith."[4]

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[1] B.C., Smalcald Articles, p. 306.

[2] W 30 II, 288f. -- SL 16, 956f.

[3] W 1, 321, 3.

[4] The translation according to the Intersynodical Catechism Committee, op. cit., p. 21.

8. The Church.

All objections Luther had to the Roman teaching and practice of penance have, in the last analysis, to be seen as objections to Catholic doctrines of the Church. The history behind this doctrine is a long and complex one, but, at the time of Luther, it had a teaching the essence of which was expressed by a follower of Thomas: "The Church universal is essentially the assembly of all believers, practically the Roman Church and the Pope; representatively the Roman Church is the college of cardinals, practically it is the Pope."[1]

According to Luther the Church is "the communion of saints,"[2] He does not acknowledge the claim that the Pope is Peter's successor.

Some of his power the Pope shares with others. Through the ordination a Catholic priest receives a certain physical quality (character indelebilis) which firstly gives him a part in Christ's divine nature. Through this potestas ordinis he has the right to administer the blood and body of Christ, offered in the Mass. Secondly, the priest receives a potestas jurisdictionis which gives him the divine power to make rules, to judge, and to punish souls in his pastorate.[3] From this it follows that he is the only one who can hear confession, absolve, and enforce satisfactions.

Luther denies that a priest has this unique quality. He has to be rightly called, rite vocatus, but his office in the

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[1] Sylvester Prierias, quoted from New S.H., III, 82.

[2] Cf. supra, p. 61.

[3] Cf. Lindberg, op. cit., pp. 66f.

Church is given to him by Christ through the congregation. As such he does not have a special power, and hearing confession, he does not hear it because of a unique position. "Never make a secret confession to a priest as a priest, but to him as to a common brother and Christian."[1]

Neither can Luther accept seven sacraments as taught in the Papal Church.[2] Sometimes Private Confession was regarded a sacrament.[3] Usually Luther spoke only of two, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

> "It seems proper that those rites be called Sacraments which contain promises with signs attached to them. The remainder, not connected with signs, are only promises. Hence it follows that there are, strictly speaking, only two Sacraments in the Church of God: Baptism and the Bread; for in these alone we note both the divinely instituted sign and the promise of the forgiveness of sins. For the sacrament of repentance, which I added to these two, lacks a visible and divinely instituted sign, and I have said that it is really nothing else than a return to Baptism."[4]

Further Luther objects to Thomas Aquinas, and his official teaching, that the sacraments confer grace ex opere operato. In the sacraments, as well as in all the other terms connected with God's acts to men, faith is essential. Only in faith, according to Luther's teaching, can we receive the forgiveness of God.

The Catholic Church derives its teaching about sin and grace, the sacraments, the Church, etc., not only from the Bible, but also from Tradition. The Council of Trent (1545-1563) said that Scripture and Tradition are equal and ought to be regarded with the same piety and devotion.[1] There is a "passive tradition" which is the treasure of faith given unchangeably; there is also an "active tradition" which is always developing within the Church. New truth is coming to light, new and deeper understanding of Christianity, all of it visible only in the course of time and experience. "Tradition accepted and formed by the Church, is Christ's own voice any time in her life. Tradition is to be compared to a stream led by the Spirit, and the Church is in fact Christ himself alive in her."[2]

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[1] W 8, 157, 3.

[2] These are: Baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance, extreme unction, ordination, marriage.

[3] Cf. supra, pp. 39f.; 44.

[4] W 6, 572 -- SL 19, 126. From The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, 1520.

Luther could do nothing but reject it. If he had not, the whole Reformation would have been impossible. Tradition in the Roman sense of the term, is not valid. Again and again he disregards the Catholic Church in this respect, and perhaps his clearest statement is found in his lectures on Genesis. He uses words which are certainly not polite or diplomatic, but in a few sentences he explains how his understanding of the Catholic teaching is opposed to his own:

> "The papists have devised some new nonsense on the basis of the badly misunderstood statement of Christ in John 16:12-13: 'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Albeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.' The papists have fabled that not all the truths that are necessary for our salvation have been transmitted, but that many mysteries were reserved for them and the bishops. These they were from time to time to set forth to the church with increasing clarity.

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[1] " . . . pari pietatis affectu ac reverentia."

[2] Skydsgaard, op. cit., p. 65.

> "To all such nonsense we oppose the statement of Christ: 'They have Moses and the prophets' (Luke 16:29). . .
>
> "This we must teach and transmit to posterity, so that men may flee and detest the revelation of new doctrines and carefully observe the command that came from heaven: 'Hear ye Him' (Matthew 17:5), that is, the evangelists and the apostles. These they should read and hear, and the Old Testament too, which offers reliable testimony concerning all these matters.
>
> "If anything is revealed beyond this, it must be according to the analogy of faith and must be a revelation that agrees with Scripture; otherwise it is diabolical."[1]

Sola scriptura, the Scripture alone, was for Luther not only a slogan, but a reality upon which he built his entire theology. Everything he said in doctrines, he insisted be based upon the Bible. Teaching which surpassed this principle, could not be norms, only guiding rules. "If they [the tradition] agree with the Scripture, we do not need them; if they disagree, we do not want them; if they add to the Scripture, we do not trust them."[2]

Through his attacks on the Roman practice of penance and the theology upon which it stood, Luther left little unopposed. One may go a step further and say he left nothing at all: He tore down the whole doctrine of penance; he strongly opposed the compulsory use of Private or secret confession; he opposed the teaching of merit and indulgences as well as of sin and grace.

One might have expected that Luther would have abolished the practice of private confession and private absolution. He did not do so. Instead he brought forward something new, basically different from the Catholic Church, and having no strong ties in the tradition of the Church.

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[1] W 43, 225f. -- SL 1, 1526f.

[2] Quoted from "What Luther Says," op. cit., II, p. 108.

CHAPTER III

LUTHER'S NEW CONCEPT OF PRIVATE CONFESSION

The previous chapter was somewhat negative and critical, discussing mainly Luther's disagreements with and attacks on Roman Catholic teaching and practice of Private Confession and related subjects.

The present chapter attempts to state positively and constructively Luther's understanding of Private Confession. However it is difficult, if not impossible to give a complete and indisputable presentation of Luther's teaching about Private Confession. Modern Luther-research has thrown much light on Luther's theological views, but has also shown that he often makes contradictory statements on the same subject. This is partly due to the circumstances under which his words were written or said, partly to the development of his own life, but most of all to the fact that Luther never allowed himself to get in a rut or become self-satisfied. He preferred to move on, to gain deeper understanding, to grow spiritually. "I belong to those who--while writing and teaching others--are progressing themselves, and not to those who immediately become great and learned doctors."[1]

This must be kept in mind when discussing Luther's concepts. However, from a study of his theology, of his attacks on the Roman Church, and of his teaching and evaluation of Private Confession,[1] it seems appropriate to discuss his concepts of Private Confession in four groups: (A) the structure of Private Confession; (B) the value of Private Confession; (C) the practice of Private Confession; (D) Private Confession and other related acts.

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[1] C. G. v. Essen, *Om bikt of avlösning* (1867), p. 59. Quoted from Lindberg, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

A. Structure of Private Confession.

1. Confession and the Bible.

A well-known book by Dr. Erich Roth,[2] *Die Privatbeichte und Schlüsselgewalt in der Theologie der Reformatoren*, contains a chapter called "Der sakramentale Charakter der Privatbeichte nach Luther."[3] Roth here maintains that during his whole life Luther regarded absolution as the third sacrament. Luther shared the Augustinian view of sacraments: *accredit verbum ad* elementum et fit sacramentum. Elementa is not only water, bread, and wine, but also verbum Euangelii vocale vel scriptum.[1] It follows, according to Roth, that the Word used in absolution is not only symbol, but gives actual grace. Private Confession is not only verbum visibile. In nine points Roth tries to show the sacramental aspect of confession and absolution.[2]

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[1] The special writings of Luther concerning confession and absolution, are the following: (1) *A Disputation for the Clarification of the Power of Indulgences* (95 theses), 1917, W 1 -- SL 18; (2) *Resolutions of the Disputations on the Power of Indulgences*, 1518, W 1 -- SL 18; (3) *Brief Instruction on How One Should Confess One's Sins*, 1519, W 2 -- SL 10; (4) *Martin Luther's Prelude on the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, 1520, W 6 -- SL 19; (5) *On the Liberty of a Christian*, 1520, W 7 -- SL 15; (6) *An Instruction for Those Who Go to Confession Concerning the Forbidden Books*, 1521, W 7 -- SL 19; (7) *On Confession, Whether the Pope Has the Authority to Demand It*, 1521, W 8 -- SL 19,5; (8) *Eight Sermons by Dr. Martin Luther*, Preached at Wittenberg in Lent. . . , 1522, W 10 III -- SL 20 (the last sermon about Private Confession); (9) *Sermon about Penance and the Sacraments*, 1524; (10) *German Catechism* (the *Large Catechism*), 1529, W 30 I -- SL 10; (11) *The Small Catechism for Pastors and Preachers in General*, 1529, W 30 I -- SL 10, with later additions; (12) *Concerning the Keys*, 1530, W 30 II -- SL 19; (13) *Articles Which Were to be Submitted on Our Part at the Council of Mantus (Smalcald Articles)*, 1537, W 50 -- SL 16.

[2] Roth, *op. cit.*,

[3] Pp. 71-101. In English: The sacramental character of Private Confession according to Luther.

It is not easy to reject any of the singular points in Roth's argument. However, there are considerations which make it difficult to accept them as a whole. First: Thesis I in 1517 said "that the whole life of believers should be repentance." This indicates that repentance is more an attitude than a single act. Secondly: Luther distinguishes between at least three different kinds of confession. Only two are included in the commandment, namely confession of sins to God and to an offended brother, and these are not followed by any declaration of absolution:

> "I refer to the practice of confessing to God alone or to our neighbor alone, begging for forgiveness. These two kinds are expressed in the Lord's prayer when we say, 'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,' etc. Indeed, the whole Lord's Prayer is nothing less than such a confession. For what is our prayer but a confession that we neither have nor do what we ought and a plea for grace and a happy conscience? This kind of confession should and must take place incessantly as long as we live. For this is the essence of a genuinely Christian life, to acknowledge that we are sinners and to pray for grace.
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> "Similarly the second confession, which each Christian makes toward his neighbor, is included in the Lord's

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[1] W 3, 403, 38. Cf. Roth, op. cit., p. 72.

[2] Cf. ibid., pp. 77-101. The book is surveyed and discussed in an article by Hans Hartog in Monatsschrift für Pastoraltheologie (Göttingen, 1957), XLVI, 360-364.

> Prayer. We are to confess our guilt before one another and forgive one another before we come into God's presence to beg for forgiveness. . . . Thus we have in the Lord's Prayer a twofold absolution: our debts both to God and to our neighbor are forgiven when we forgive our neighbor and become reconciled with him.[1]

The third kind of confession described is Private Confession.[2]

> "Beside this public, daily, and necessary confession, there is also the secret confession which takes place privately before a single brother. . . . This type of confession is not included in the commandment like the other two. . . . Thus by divine ordinance Christ himself has entrusted absolution to his Christian church and commanded us to absolve one another from sins."[3]

Luther refers the command to absolve each other to Matthew 18:15-19, but this does not mean that he regards absolution as a special sacrament. Thirdly, and this is a stronger argument: Any sacrament must have a Biblical basis and be commanded in the Scripture which Private Confession is not: "About your confession the New Testament does not say a word."[4] "Although it cannot be proved from Scripture that private confession. . . must be practiced, yet private confession pleases me greatly."[5]

Admittedly Luther occasionally speaks of repentance (confession and absolution) as some kind of sacrament. However, the whole Lutheran church settled on only two sacraments, Baptism and Holy Communion, and this was done not against the basic attitude of Luther, but in accordance with it. ". . . the sacrament of repentance, which I added to these two [Baptism and the Bread] lacks a visible and divinely instituted sign."[1]

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[1] *B.C., Luther's Large Catechism*, p. 457.

[2] Cf. *supra*, p. 45.

[3] *B.C., Large Catechism*, p. 458.

[4] W A 8, 340. "Von deinem Beichten sagt es [das Neue Testament] nicht einen Buchstaben." A sermon on Luke 17:11, cf. Lindberg, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

[5] W 6, 546 -- SL 19, 85. From *The Babylonian Captivity*.

Thus we must conclude that Luther did not accept Private Confession as a sacrament, that it was not commanded in the Bible, and that it cannot be proved from Scripture that Private Confession is compulsory.

However, Luther did not abandon Private Confession. On the contrary he said, "Of Private Confession I am heartily in favor."[2] For Luther this means that Private Confession could not in any way be opposed to the Bible. If this had been the case, he would certainly not have recommended it. Luther's concepts of Private Confession apparently cannot be rooted in a Biblical command, yet these must be Biblically related. When looking for it, we find he structured the concepts upon his Biblical understanding of confession as repentance, faith and absolution; of the office of the keys; and the use of declared absolution.

2. Confession as Repentance, Faith and Absolution.

(a) Repentance. Like the Catholic Church, Luther made a distinction between poenitentia interior and poenitentia exterior. The former is confession of sins to God alone, and God forgives him. This confession is built upon a Scriptural command.[3]

Private Confession will be grouped under poenitentia exterior. Here confession is made to another man, followed by his absolution. "Anyone who has a strong faith in God and is sure that his sins are forgiven, may omit this Private Confession (Beicht) and only confess to God. However, how many people are there who have such a strong faith?"[1]

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[1] W 6, 572. Cf. p. 70f.

[2] Cf. W 10 III, 61f. -- SL 20, 48.

[3] Cf. supra, p. 94.

Confession to God alone or to God through another man, always is preceded by repentance, i.e., "To repent means to feel the wrath of God in earnest because of one's sins, so that the sinner experiences anguish of heart and is filled with a painful longing for the salvation and mercy of God."[2] Usually Luther connects repentance with preaching and effect of the law.[3] "Since we are clothed in flesh and blood, the preaching of the letter (the Law) is also necessary in order first to put people to death by the law and destroy all their self-confidence, so that they may know themselves, become hungry for the Spirit, and thirsty for grace. . . ."[4] Law creates three kinds of fear basic for repentance.[5] The first is fear of God because of punishment without loving him; the second is a fear of punishment combined with love of God; the third is a fear of God caused only by love for him. Repentance is necessary, and God "wants to forgive sins to those who acknowledge them."[6] However, repentance in itself can never be so complete that it qualifies one for forgiveness. Luther sharply attacked the Roman teaching about contrition,[1] and in fact never tires stressing this point. God does not regard one favorably because of repentance and sorrow.[2] What He looks for is faith.

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[1] W 10 III, 58 (translated from German).

[2] W 43, 534 -- SL 2, 316.

[3] Cf. Roth, op. cit., pp. 30f.

[4] W 7, 658f. -- SL 18, 1317. Written in 1521.

[5] Cf. Normann, op. cit., pp. 169f.

[6] W 40 II, 359f. -- SL 5, 514.

(b) Faith. As in Christianity itself, faith in God is the very center of Luther's structure of Private Confession. We receive forgiveness through faith.[3] His main objection to the Roman theology of penance was that nothing is said about Christ and faith.[4] Whoever comes to confess sins and believes in God, receives what he believes; whoever does not believe, is still under judgment.[5] In the practice of Private Confession, Luther recommends that the confessor say before absolution is declared: "God be merciful to you and strengthen your faith. Again he shall say: Do you believe that the forgiveness I declare is the forgiveness of God? After an affirmative answer, he goes on: Be it done to you as you have believed!"[6]

Luther admits that it is not easy to believe.

> "No article of faith is more difficult to believe than the article which says: I believe in the forgiveness of sins. . . . This article affects us personally and enters into our experience. . . . The most difficult thing is not only that we are to speak about this article and to understand it, but also that everyone of us is to accept it for himself with certainty."[7]

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[1] Cf. supra, p. 81.

[2] Cf. W 6, 545 -- SL 19, 84.

[3] Cf. supra, p. 68f.

[4] B.C., Smalcald Articles, p. 306.

[5] Cf. W I, 595, 18.

[6] B.C., Luther's Small Catechism, p. 351.

[7] W 28, 271f. -- SL 8, 885.

But even so, faith is necessary. It is a comfort for us to know that God is also the giver of faith, and that faith is not built on inner feelings: "He [the one having been forgiven his sins in absolution] should be quiet at heart. But he who seeks peace in a different way - for instance - through an inner experience - certainly seems to tempt God and seek peace in substantial things, not in faith."[1]

(c) Absolution. In Private Confession, this is where absolution enters in. In absolution man can hear from another man that God has forgiven his sins.

> "To this day this is the way to obtain the forgiveness of sins. A servant of the church or some other Christian tells you: God is not angry with you. For the sake of his Son, Jesus Christ, He has forgiven all your sins. When you hear this promise, you should believe it with all your might and should rather let yourself be torn apart than doubt it."[2]

So highly does Luther regard absolution that on certain occasions he calls it "the very sacrament of penance."[3] To hear this declared absolution is so valuable that a man may confess even small sins (if he has not any grave ones) to be able to hear the "personal Word from God of absolution."[4]

The minister is not a judge like the Roman Catholic priest. When a man has confessed his sins, the pastor is obliged to absolve him. "God alone knows the heart, and not the confessor. His responsibility is not to inquire, but to hear and to absolve."[5]

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[1] W 1, 540f.

[2] W 52, 497 -- SL 13a, 914.

[3] W 2, 717.

[4] W 2, 721. Quoted from Harms, op. cit. p. 23.

[5] W 7, 290-298. Quoted from Lindberg, op. cit., p. 99.

Private Confession is certainly an act in itself, but it cannot be seen apart from the Word, whether given in sermon, in teaching, in Baptism, or in Holy Communion.[1] Forgiveness of sins is always declared. "A Christian preacher cannot open his mouth without preaching absolution because this is the sum of the gospel: Everyone believing in Christ shall be forgiven his sins."[2]

Thus the Biblical relation of Private Confession is that of the gospel itself - the forgiveness of sins. Here Luther finds a theological basis for Private Confession. Further, if we ask on what basis he permitted man to declare absolution on behalf of God, the answer comes in his understanding of the keys.

3. The Office of the Keys.

The keys are an office and a power which Christ gave to His church for binding and loosing sin - not only the gross, obvious sins, but the subtle and hidden ones known only to God.[3] The Biblical references Luther finds mainly in Matthew 16:19 where Jesus says to Peter, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven"; in Matthew 18:18f, where the office is given to all disciples; and in John 20:22f where Jesus confirmed this authority: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained."

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[1] Cf. _supra_, p. 71.

[2] W 15, 481.

[3] W 50, 243 -- SL 16, 1943. From the _Smalcald Articles_.

Thus Luther does not accept the idea that power is given to Peter alone, but it is given to all disciples and, therefore, to the Church. "No one is appointed as possessor of the keys except the churches, that is, those who stand on the Rock. The Christian Church alone has the keys, no one besides . . . ."[1]

The office of the keys has two functions. Firstly the keys are in the service of church discipline and the Law. The church must punish unrepentant sinners with a public sentence as valid as **if the sentence were** given by Christ. This can also be called the service of the Law in that sin is revealed to man, exhorting him to fear God and thus seeking to bring him to repentance. Secondly the keys are in the service of the Gospel.

> "The key that looses is the authority or the office to pronounce the confessed and penitent sinner free from sins and to promise him eternal life again; . . . . And if a man believes this and does not change, he is certainly eternally saved. . . . The key that looses does the work of the Gospel. . . ."[2]

Summing up his ideas concerning these two functions, Luther writes: "In a word, these keys are the executors, the executives, and the administrators of the Gospel, which simply preaches these two doctrines, repentance and the forgiveness of sins."[3]

The function of forgiveness is the most important of the two.[4] Since forgiveness is offered in the Word, the keys are effective in all functions of the church, in preaching, in reading the Word, in the sacrament, and in absolution as a special act. However, Luther usually connects the office of the keys with confession and absolution. "By the power of the keys secret sins are to be forgiven. . . . The Gospel is public absolution; in the presence of the minister private absolution is given."[1]

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[1] W 17 II, 452 -- SL 11, 2304.

[2] W 30 II, 503 -- SL 19, 952. Written in 1530.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Cf. Kurt Fror, Gesetz und Evangelium in der Beichte (1958), p. 32.

The Church can never use the keys as a conditionalis Clavis, i.e., make the absolution depend upon the confession and the judgment of the pastor. When a man comes seeking absolution, the confessor must assume there is a desire for it. If not, he would not have come.[2] Thus the pastor is never a judge. On the contrary, he absolves as a servant of the Lord. "The keys of Peter are not a power (Gewalt) but a service."[3] In the first function of the keys, the church may exclude a member from the congregation. But this takes place only when a man is an obvious sinner showing no sign of repentance. As soon as he is repentant, the second and only function of the keys, following his confession, is to absolve him without pressure or judgment.

It may be added that Luther speaks of still another key - the key of knowledge, built on Luke 11:52.[4] This key is used to open the doors of Christian truth through preaching and teaching.[5]

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[1] W-T 3, No. 3666.

[2] W 2, 719.

[3] W 2, 713f. In his sermon about penitence, 1518.

[4] W 30 II, 491. From Concerning the Keys, 1530.

[5] Cf. Lindberg, op. cit., p. 95.

This aspect was of great importance in combining Private Confession and examination (Verhör).[1]

4. The Absolution-Formula.

Absolution is declared by the confessor even if God is the one who absolves. In the Small Catechism Luther recommends that the confessors say: "According to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."[2] Here he adopts the Catholic expression absolvo te. Deviating from it, he starts with "according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ."

However, this is not a required absolution formula. Luther gives several possibilities. In a table talk he speaks of the laying on of hands in absolving: "Such a power has the absolution with laying on hands when the church servant says: I declare thee free from all thy sins in the name of Father and Son and Holy Ghost. . . (that) God is the one absolving and declaring free, not a man who only is God's tool. . . ."[3] In another connection he recommends: "Because you pray for it, I declare to you the forgiveness of your sins in the place of and by authority of our Lord Jesus Christ."[4] How little he is concerned about the wording, but how much about the content can best be seen in his exegesis of Genesis 27:28f.:

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[1] Cf. infra, p. 120.

[2] B.C., p. 351.

[3] Erl. edition LXII, p. 2. Quoted from the German in Teologisk Tidsskrift for den Danske Folkekirke, Copenhagen, VI, 194f., an article by M. Th. Berg: "Om Absolusjonen," 193-231.

[4] From a small piece Etlich kurtz vortrostung, so es mit dem sterben ober handt nymbt, durch G. Spalatium. . .D. Martin Luther absolution (Erfurt, 1530). The piece is not in W. The quotation is found in Begleichwort zu den Ordnungen Der Beichte und zu Handreichung zur Einzelbeichte, bearbeitet von der Lutherischen Liturgischen Konferenz Deutschlands, 1957, p. 9.

> ". . .The blessings of Holy Scripture are real, not merely optative blessings; they are blessings in the indicative which confer and bring about the matter to which the word refers. Blessings of this kind are present in the New Covenant also through Christ's priesthood.
>
> "This is our blessing when I say, 'Receive the absolution of your sins.' If I were to say: 'I sincerely wish you grace, mercy, eternal salvation and liberation from sins,' this could be called a blessing of love.
>
> "But the blessing of declaration and of faith and of the gift which is present is as follows: 'I declare you free of your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,' i.e., I reconcile you with God, I take from you God's wrath and displeasure and place you into grace, I give you the inheritance of eternal life and of the Kingdom of Heaven. All these words have an omnipotence, truly conferred here and now upon you, if you believe, because they are not our works, but the works of God through our service.
>
> "Blessing, therefore, is not expressing a wish, but an administration (non igitur benedictiones imprecativae, sunt, sed collativae)."[1]

The words of absolution may vary, but the content is always the same: "Christ is sitting there, Christ is hearing, Christ is answering, not a man."[2] Consequently the absolution formula should be connected with the order of Christ, for something real takes place when this is done: The words of absolution are not only a symbol; what is spoken becomes actuality. "Through the absolution you are absolved."[3]

One condition which must not be neglected - the sinner must accept the absolution in faith. The words of forgiveness are never withdrawn, but are ineffective until man in faith grasps them. "If, then, you do not believe the absolution, it is not its fault, but yours. Why do you not accept it? If I distribute gold or silver and you accept it, you have it; if you do not accept it, the gold and silver nonetheless retain their nature and value."[1]

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[1] W 43, 424.

[2] W-T 4, 5176.

[3] W 12, 516. Cf. Roth, op. cit., p. 60.

On this basis it cannot be said that Luther recommends a "conditional absolution." Absolution is declared unconditionally, and God only knows if absolution is accepted in faith or not.

B. Value of Private Confession.

1. Gift.

Having placed Private Confession as one of the ways by which God forgives sin, Luther has much to say concerning the value of confession. Primarily it is a gift from God. "I will let no man take private confession away from me, and I would not give it up for all the treasures in the world."[2] Absolution is the center of Private Confession, and he is convinced of Christ's acting and presence.

2. Comfort.

The gift of God is given as a great comfort to man. Luther knew from personal experience how troubled his conscience could be. To find peace with God and thus peace of conscience was not easy. He pointed to the way, as he does, for example, in his large commentary on Galatians: "When your conscience is terrified by the Law and wrestles with the judgment of God, consult neither your reason nor the Law, but rest upon grace alone and upon the Word of consolation."[1] He also knew how extremely difficult it was to find this way without help. As a young man having struggled alone, he went to a single brother for help,[2] and could therefore affirm that the benefit derived from the use of the keys and private absolution was great. This was not a singular experience, for Luther used Private Confession throughout his life: "For the sake of this part /absolution/ most of all do I use confession and I will not and cannot do without it, for it has often given me great comfort and still does so daily when I am sad and downcast."[3]

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[1] W 47, 334.

[2] W 10, III, 61.

Luther understood the many difficulties in people's lives, and he saw how Private Confession, more than anything else, may be the only means of helping them. In a lecture on Genesis some of his insights concerning man's inner life are expressed:

> "Private confession is to be kept in the church, because consciences afflicted and oppressed by the terrors of sin lay themselves bare in private confession and receive a consolation which they could not lay hold of in a sermon preached in public. To such people we want to open the door of confession as a refuge--people whose consciences the devil holds captive in his snares and has fascinated and worn out so thoroughly that they do not know how to release and extricate themselves but only feel and see that they are bound to perish. For there is no greater misery in this life than the pains and the anguish of the heart that lacks advice and consolation;
>
> "Therefore such people should be given an open door to confession so that they may seek and find consolation from the ministers of the church."[4]

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[1] W 40, I, 204 -- SL 9, 157. Galatians 2:3.

[2] W-T 4, No. 4362.

[3] W 30, III, 569 -- SL 17, 2021. From a writing of 1532.

[4] W 44, 221 -- SL 2, 1002.

To Luther Private Confession is an extraordinary remedy for afflicted consciences,[1] He knows that man is healed after confession and absolution,[2] even though the feeling and experience of this healing are not always present. When comfort seems to be absent he says: "For although I know that my sins are forgiven me, yet this 'pukah,' this stumbling block continues to return: I cannot live without shame and blushing. . . ."[3] Even so, the sins are forgiven. In hearing the absolution, Luther expresses himself in an unusual way by emphasizing the fact that man is never closer to Christ and his grace than in Private Confession.[4] And he writes in another connection: "When being absolved, and getting comfort from my brother, it is as if I hear the voice of God himself."[5] This is Luther's evaluation of Private Confession. He wants others to share his opinion and uses words of praise such as: "All Christians should thank God from their hearts for the Private Confession which is given to us and we are permitted to use: it would have been very difficult if it had not existed!"[6]

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[1] W 6, 546 -- SL 19, 85.

[2] W 44, 221f. -- SL 2, 1002f.

[3] W 10, III, 61f. -- SL 20, 48.

[4] Quoted from Normann, op. cit., p. 178.

[5] Ibid., p. 179.

[6] Translated from German "O es sollte allen Christen gar leid sein, dass die heimliche Beichte nicht ware, und Gott aus Herzen danken, dass sie uns erlaubt und gegeben ist" (W 8, 164).

3. Humility.

In addition to this aspect of God's gift and comfort, there is also another value in Private Confession, a value on a purely human level - namely confession to another as an act of humiliation. By nature no man wants to humble himself, his pride forbids him to do so. Luther seemed to have good insight into man's nature. Nobody enjoys admitting he does wrong: "Everyone is so constituted that he does not want the sins he commits to be considered sin. He wants it to be called righteousness before the world and before God."[1] If man does admit his wrong, it is with great resistance and hesitancy.

> "All people are so minded that they do not want themselves and their dealings to be publicly known. They cannot bear to be rebuked. . . . Who, then, is the man who hates the light? All of us! For not one of you would want his story written on his forehead. All of us still gladly hear people praise and honor us. No one thinks: Ah, God be gracious to me; for if the sins of which I am conscious in my heart were evident to the world, I should deserve to be hanged. To be sure, the world honors me; but if it knew who I am, it would spit at me. . . ."[2]

Luther is not saying that sins must be confessed in public. However, to be perfectly honest and fair with himself, man ought to confess his sins to another from time to time. "He takes a brother aside and tells him his trouble. What harm does it do him to humble himself a little before his neighbor, and put himself to shame?"[3] There is a "cross and humiliation" in confessing to another, but it is part of a Christian's life.[4]

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[1] W 47, 122f. -- SL 7, 2002f. From a sermon in 1538.

[2] Ibid.

[3] W 10, II, 61f. -- SL 20, 48. From his Wittenberg sermons 1522.

[4] Cf. On Confession, 1521. W 8 -- SL 19, 5.

Luther is careful to stress that humiliation has no value in gaining any kind of merits. The value of humility comes when man experiences a true relationship to God and to fellow man.[1]

4. Sharing of Burdens.

For the church as the body of Christ sharing of each other's burdens is another expression of fellowship in the congregation. Each member is responsible for the other; if one suffers, they all suffer. Thus each must bear the other's burdens. The underlying motivation is love: "Love takes care of the neighbor's sin and weakness."[2] "The one shows his sickness, the other heals his wounds."[3] Luther discusses mutual care especially in connection with his concept of the Church, and since Private Confession is one of the means of soul-care,[4] it naturally arises in this connection.

C. Practice of Private Confession.

1. Voluntary.

Having the conviction that Private Confession was not commanded in the Scriptures Luther lanced his attacks on the Papal Church which made confession compulsory.[5] Private Confession must be voluntary, and no one should be forced to use it.

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[1] Normann, op. cit., p. 176.

[2] Luther. Translated from Norwegian in a quotation referred to by Normann, op. cit., p. 181.

[3] Loc. cit.

[4] Cf. supra, p. 61.

[5] Cf. supra, pp. 82ff.

He stresses this repeatedly in his confessional books.[1] On the one hand, it is free; on the other hand, the importance of Private Confession is evaluated so highly that he says: "They [people not using confession] ought to know that we do not regard them as Christians. . . . Therefore, when I urge you to go to confession, I am simply urging you to be a Christian."[2]

The sum of his thought may be expressed in a letter he wrote to the congregation in Esslingen in 1523:

> "It is true that I have said confession is a good thing. Likewise, I keep no one from fasting, making a pilgrimage, eating fish, observing festivals, etc. Yet all these things must be done of one's free will, and none of them should be done as though one were bound in conscience and would commit mortal sin if failing to do them."[3]

Practice of Private Confession is free. Acceptance of God's forgiveness is not limited to Private Confession alone. It can as easily be accepted through preaching, the sacraments, and Public Confession.[4] Private Confession is a valuable means in the care of souls, and to a great extent because of the comfort and assurance it brings to the individual.

2. What Should be Confessed?

"The enumeration of sins should be left free to everybody to do or not as he will,"[5] Luther wrote in the Smalcald Articles.[6]

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[1] Cf. supra, pp. 33; 35; 45ff; 49.

[2] B.C., Large Catechism, pp. 459f.

[3] W 12, 157 -- SL 21a, 562.

[4] Cf. infra, pp. 116f.

[5] B.C., Smalcald Articles, p. 312.

[6] Cf. discussion on Smalcald Articles, Chapter I.

In his Small Catechism he points to different confessions which may be used by a father or mother, a son or daughter, a master or servant,[1] the sum of which is that only sins burdening the conscience need be confessed. He goes even further: "If you have knowledge of no sin at all (which is quite unlikely) you should mention none in particular, but receive forgiveness upon the general confession. . . ."[2]

In this statement, however, one should note the parenthesis. To participate only in the general confession is not regarded normal or usual. Private Confession ought to be used because there are few people, if any, who do not occasionally suffer from a troubled conscience.

Concretely, Luther says one should confess sins which "in public are regarded as mortal sins ("todsund"), and sins which trouble the conscience."[3] In his Brief Instruction on How One Should Confess One's Sins, he is more specific when he writes: "Sins, purposely done against God's commandments have to be confessed."[4]

Specific mention of sins may need to be made, but sin is more than evil acts or thoughts. Sin is unfaithfulness,[5] which can never be confessed in complete detail.

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[1] These passages are quoted in Chapter I, supra, pp. 41ff.

[2] B.C., Small Catechism, pp. 350f.

[3] W 2, 721; W 8, 182.

[4] W 2. Translated from German, written 1519.

[5] W 15, 481. Cf.

The very intention of Private Confession exceeds confession of sins. The center is not repentance or confession, but absolution which is accepted in faith.[1]

> "To confess does not mean to recite a long catalog of sins, but to desire absolution. This is in itself a sufficient confession, that is, acknowledging yourself guilty and confessing that you are a sinner. And no more should be demanded and required, no naming and recitation of all or some, many or a few sins, unless you of your own accord desire to indicate something that especially burdens your conscience and calls for instruction and advice or specific comfort. . . ."[2]

He gives beautiful expression to the extent to which Private Confession includes his concern for soul-care when he says:

> "We are not [when confessing] to think of doing or giving God any expensive deed; we are only to accept and be given by Him. You don't need to come and tell Him how pious or evil you are. The only important thing is for you to explain your desire and to let Him give you a happy start and a good conscience."[3]

Thus Luther teaches that confession of sins which disturbs man's peace of mind must be made. Confession of specific details may be necessary if one is excessively confused, but this is not mandatory. The act of confessing and being absolved is not primarily one of looking back but rather one of looking forward, to be able to face new challenges and tasks: "If you want to confess your sins, then be far more intent upon looking to, and thinking of, your future life than your former ones."[4]

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[1] Cf. supra, pp. 98ff.

[2] W 21, 263 -- SL 11, 722. From a sermon in 1531.

[3] The quotation translated from Norwegian, Normann, op. cit., p. 176.

[4] W 17, II, 491 -- SL 11, 620.

3. To Whom Should One Confess?

Luther usually mentions the minister as the one who hears confession and declares absolution. In his definition of Private Confession in his Small Catechism he says: "Private Confession has two parts. First, we make a personal confession of sins to the pastor, and then we receive absolution. . . ."[1] The pastor is a servant who acts on behalf of the entire congregation. On this basis considering the special qualifications a pastor should have, he is the one whom a person will generally select as his confessor.

However, there are many exceptions. The right to absolve and thus to hear confession, is given to the Church, to the congregations, and to every member within the congregation. There may be cases when one wants to confide in someone other than the pastor. In that case he should certainly feel free to do so. "If the matter is so repulsive that one is ashamed to confess it before the minister, let him confide in some other Christian and pious person, whoever he may be, whose faith is apparent. . . ."[2] Anyone, be it pastor or layman, hearing confession and declaring absolution does this not as judge but as a friend and brother.[3]

4. The Seal of Confession.

From the time the secret confession gained in prominence in the Roman Church, the seal of confession was stressed. The

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[1] This quotation made from the New Intersynodical Catechism, op. cit., p. 42.

[2] W 4, 221 -- SL 2, 1002.

[3] Cf. W 10, III 58.

Catholic author Kurtscheid discusses this at greater length.[1] He makes several references in this respect between the fifth and ninth centuries, and shows how the first laws concerning the seal of confession were given in 813.[2]

The fourth Lateran Council in 1215 which made the practice of the sacrament of penance a canon law,[3] gave additional laws for the seal.[4] Here it is specified that the confessor dare not in any way betray the confessee. If the priest is in doubt, he may ask his superior for advice. However, by no means may he reveal the identity of the one who has confessed to him. If the priest should break the seal of confession, he loses his office and must stay in a strict monastery doing penance the rest of his life.

Luther had a similar view concerning the seal of confession, though the reasons may have differed.[5] In the later part of his life, he expressed his opinion in one of his table-talks very clearly:

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[1] Bertrand Kurtscheid, A History of the Seal of Confession, trans. by F. A. Marks (St. Louis: Herder Book Company, 1927), especially pp. 76-115.

[2] Ibid., p. 79.

[3] Cf. supra, p. 21f.

[4] "Caveat autem omnino (sacerdos), ne verbo aut signo aut alio quovis modo aliquatenus prodat peccatorem. Sed, si prudentiore consilio indiguerit, illud absque ulla expressione personae caute requirat, quoniam, qui peccatur in paenitentiali iudicio sibi detectum preaesumpserit revelare, non solum a sacerdotali officio deponendum decernimus, verum etiam ad agendam perpetuam paenitentiam in arctum monasterium detrundendum," Dict. Theol. Cath., XII, 1, Col. 949-50, Cf. Kurtscheid, op. cit., pp. 115f.

[5] In Lutheran tradition this seal has repeatedly been stressed by civil law. Most of these laws were given long after the Reformation because the first centuries stressed the seal as a matter of course. Some examples: (a) The Prussian Common Law of 1794 ordained: "Whatever is confined to a minister of religion under the Seal of Confession or official secrecy must be kept secret under pain of removal from office." This law was repeated in 1851. The German penal code (Par. 52) permits refusal of testimony on the part of "clergymen in regard to

> "Within the church's sphere of authority we deal in secret with the conscience and do not take its jurisdiction from the civil estate. Therefore people should leave us undisturbed in our sphere of authority and should not drag into their jurisdiction what we do in secret. I, too, have given secret advice, and because the matter was secret, the advice was justly given in this way. If the affair comes under the jurisdiction of civil authority later on, we know nothing of it. Nor shall they drag us into the case."[1]

This was not only a general statement. In an actual case he replied to a direct question as to whether a confessor could ever give testimony in court: "One must distinguish between the authority of the church and the authority of the state." "She [it was a case where a woman had killed her child] did not confess to me, but to the Lord Jesus Christ; since Christ keeps the secret, I also must keep it and unhesitatingly say: I did not hear it; Christ has heard it, so he may say it."[2]

In Luther's view, every Christian has a right to hear confession and give absolution. Thus the seal of confession applies to the pastor as well as the layman. Lindberg is in harmony with Luther when he states the reason for the seal of confession as: "Whoever hears confession is acting as the

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what has been confided to them in their official capacity." (b) In Austria the criminal code of 1873 (Par. 51) says that a clergyman cannot be cross-examined. (c) Switzerland, Belgium, Italy, Scotland, and the Scandinavian countries have similar laws. In Scandinavia a minister may lose his office, and even be imprisoned for as much as six months for breaking the seal.

[1] W-T 4, (5179).

[2] W-T 4, (5178).

ear of Christ, as the mouth of Christ, as the hand of Christ. Not as a private person I am hearing confession, but only as an instrument in the Lord's hand."[1]

D. Private Confession and Related Acts.

By "related acts" we do not mean God's forgiveness of sins offered in his Word through preaching, the sacraments, etc., but rather the acts in Lutheran practice often connected with Private Confession - namely Public Confession, Holy Communion, and "Examination." In order to get a more complete picture of Luther's whole concept of Private Confession and since the above mentioned were all known to and discussed by him (especially the latter), it is necessary to deal with them.

1. Private Confession and Public Confession.

By Public Confession in this connection is meant confession of sins made by the whole congregation or the pastor on behalf of all, followed by the pastor's declared absolution. In the United States it is usually called Public Confession, in German and Scandinavian languages General Confession.[2]

Luther was familiar with Public Confession, mentioning it briefly in his Small Catechism: "If you have knowledge of no sin at all (which is quite unlikely), you should mention none in particular, but receive forgiveness upon the general confession which you make to God in the presence of the confessor."[1]

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[1] Lindberg, op. cit., p. 155.

[2] Public Confession is, therefore, quite different from confession of sins made in public. This confession was a man's confession of sins before the whole congregation. It was widely practiced in the early church, cf. supra;p.17; even today it is found a few places in Lutheranism, cf. infra,pp. 345ff.

The practice of Public Confession originated most likely in Southern Germany and is known from the ninth century.[2] It was usually read by the priest in first person singular, and repeated by all members of the congregation while kneeling. The use of this confession is known to have spread to Italy and France. At the time of the Reformation Public Confession was quite commonly practiced throughout Germany. Luther confirms this statement in writing about it in the Smalcald Articles: "The sophists [the priests] instructed the people to place their confidence in their own words. Hence the expression in the pulpit when the general confession was recited to the people. . . ."

From the very beginning Public Confession was maintained in some of the Lutheran churches. The congregation in Nuremberg wanted to retain it. It was brought to Luther's attention when some of the reformers apparently opposed it. In 1533 he approved the retention of Public Confession together with Private Confession.[4] The stress, however, was put rather upon Private Confession, and the practice of Public Confession was never recommended at the sacrifice of Private Confession. This view seemed to have been widely accepted. The Erlangen professor Walter Caspari summarized the development: "In the first half of the Reformation period the Lutherans of Wurtemberg had become content with a general exhortation and the offer to hear private confession."[1]

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[1] B.C., Small Catechism, pp. 350f.

[2] Cf. short article in New S.H., IV, 449.

[3] B.C., Smalcald Articles, p. 305 (Part III, Article III).

[4] New S.H., VII, 76.

2. Private Confession and Holy Communion.

In the Augsburg Confession, Article XXV we read: ". . . The custom has been retained among us of not administering the sacrament to those who have not previously been examined and absolved."[2] The book was written in 1530, several years before Luther reached a similar position.

There seems to have been some doubt about the retention of the custom. An extensive study has been made by Klaus Harms.[3] He shows how Luther's friend, Karlstadt,[4] who was a pastor in Wittenberg, began to oppose the use of confession and absolution before Holy Communion. Karlstadt held that forgiveness of sins could only be accepted in faith. The sermon offers God's forgiveness, and having received it, man does not need any kind of formal absolution. Thus on Christmas Eve in 1521, Karlstadt celebrated Holy Communion in his church without any previous confession and absolution. He did the same on several succeeding occasions

Luther did not hear of this until later because he was in Wartburg at this time. In March he gave his eight Invocavit sermons,[5] the last of which treats Private Penance. To a great extent Luther agrees with Karlstadt! It is contrary to

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[1] New S.H., III, 222.

[2] B.C., p. 61.

[3] Harms, op. cit.

[4] Ibid., pp. 34-37. Karlstadt lived 1480-1541.

[5] W 10, III -- SL 20.

Scripture that one must confess and be absolved before each Communion. Having agreed thus far with Karlstadt, Luther, however, strongly disagrees with the former's view that Private Confession is superfluous. It is not. "We have to separate between an established, ordered confession (Beichte) by the church and the not established confession. The free confession has to remain, but only free and uncompulsory (unverordnet)."[1] Luther did not mention this merely in passing, nor to agree with Karlstadt's practice. In a sermon as late as 1534, Luther remarks that from time to time he went to Holy Communion without previous confession and absolution:

> "Seven years ago I intended not to go to the Sacrament until I should be entirely fit. . . . I said: Devil, I need the Sacrament and cannot do without its comfort whether I be fit or unfit; therefore I shall attend and delay no longer. And so I communed. . .at times even without having confessed."[2]

However, these were exceptions. Luther felt that some kind of preparation was necessary before Holy Communion. Order must be kept in the church, and a certain checking of communicants had to be made. Thus later in 1522, he claimed that an examination[3] should be conducted. Connecting this with Private Confession, two years later communicants were required to see the minister for absolution before they were permitted to partake of the Lord's Supper. Therefore, the Augsburg Confession, Article XXV is right in stating the practice, but it is characterized more as an established custom than as an absolute law.

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[1] Quoted from Klaus Harms, "Die Eintelbeichte," Monatsschrift für Pastoraltheologie, Vol. 42 (1953), p. 378.

[2] W 37, 351 -- SL 13b, 1855.

[3] Cf. infra, p. 120.

3. Private Confession and Examination.

It is not clear exactly when Luther introduced examination (Verhör).[1] It might have been as early as 1522, but certainly not later than 1523. He then writes:

> "Those who are about to commune are to announce to the bishop or the minister in charge that they want to partake of the Lord's Supper, so that he may know their names and their life. Then let him not admit the petitioners unless they give an account of their faith and reply to the question whether they know what the Lord's Supper is, what it stands for, and of what they desire to become partakers by its use; to wit, whether they are able to recite the words of consecration from memory and explain that they come because of the awareness of sin or the fear of death, or, troubled by some other evil of the temptation of the flesh, hunger and thirst for the Word and sign of grace and salvation from the Lord through the minister. . . ."[2]

It can clearly be seen from this statement that examination and Private Confession may take place simultaneously. However, Luther is still somewhat vague as to what extent examination should be claimed. He adds: "I hold that it is enough that he who desires to be communed be questioned or explored in this way once a year. In fact, he may possibly have so much knowledge that he needs to be explored only once in his life or not at all."[3]

A year later he states that examination must occur before every communion,[4] and nothing is mentioned concerning exceptions to the rule! Along the same line in 1526, he writes:

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[1] Cf. Harms, Die gottesdienstliche. . ., op. cit., pp. 43f.

[2] W 12, 215 -- SL 10, 2247.

[3] Loc. cit.

[4] W 15, 487ff. In a sermon on Palm Sunday.

"Therefore I have said that the sacrament is to be given to nobody without his making clear what he knows and why he goes. This can most practically (am fuglichsten) take place in the Private Confession (in der Beichte)."[1] He goes so far as to apply the term Confession and Private Confession to "examination,"[2] and seemingly makes each a part of the other.

The concern for imparting knowledge to people made Luther write his Small Catechism which soon became a basic book in examination. He considers the examination so valuable that he says years later: "The main reason for maintaining confession is to repeat and hear catechism."[3] In a letter to the congregation in Frankfurt am Main he writes: "I would rather lose everything in the world than the smallest piece of this confession. It is for the Christians the first, the most important and the best school in which they learn to understand, to practice the Word of God and their faith."[4] In the same letter he adds that this kind of examination is not for "the pastor or magister Phillippus or people knowing what sin is," but it is for the common man and for growing adolescents. Again it is called confession: "not only that they should tell their sins, but also that they shall be examined if they know the Lord's Prayer, the articles of faith, the Ten Commandments and what else is in the Catechism."

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[1] W 19, 482-523. Sermon on the Sacrament.

[2] W-T 4, No. 5174. Cf. Harms, op. cit., pp. 46f.

[3] E 59, 78. From a table talk.

[4] Quoted from Swedish in Lindberg, op. cit., p. 94. W 30, III 566, written in 1533.

One must admit that Luther's sayings regarding Private Confession and examination are somewhat confusing. On the one hand he stresses that Private Confession is voluntary. On the other hand he seems to combine Private Confession and examination, and examination before Holy Communion is compulsory! What then of the freedom of Private Confession? Klaus Harms is convinced that Luther combined these two acts from a pedagogical point of view only. In a longer discussion including quotations from Luther,[1] he states that examination is compulsory, but Private Confession is principally free! Practically, the two were often combined, but they did not have to be in all cases. Harm's opinion is confirmed by our discussion of the Private Confession, and is also confirmed by Luther as late as 1538. He says absolution must be offered in the sermon. However, nobody can be forced to confess to anyone, and Luther goes on to say that if someone, who is steadfast in faith and doctrine, wants to confess to "God alone and then receive the Sacrament, he should not be forced to go any further."[2]

The final conclusion of Luther's teaching on Private Confession and examination is: His teaching is not clear. However, Private Confession is completely free for those who are strong Christians and are steadfast in faith. They may go to Holy Communion without any confession and absolution, if they so desire.

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[1] Harms, op. cit., pp. 46-52.

[2] "Widerumb die jenen ungezwungen (zovor so sie wol bericht im glauben und jnn der lere Christi sind) so allein Gott beichten wollen und das Sakrament darauff nemen, die soll man nichts weiter zwinger." Quotation from Harms, op. cit., p. 51.

However, the young and the weak in faith who lack knowledge, must go to examination before participating in the Lord's Supper. This is compulsory. The examination was also combined with a confession followed by absolution. Thus this kind of Private Confession did not remain free, but became compulsory. "Here we find a factor which gave offence in a return to catholic view, or could at least help in preparing the decay in the practice of Private Confession."[1]

SUMMARY

To summarize Luther's concept of Private Confession we will make several points, at the same time showing the basic differences (or similarity in one case) with Roman Catholic teaching:

(a) Private Confession is confession of sins made by one man to another, followed by the other's declared absolution.--This is opposed to Roman teaching which says that confession must be made to the priest alone.

(b) Private Confession is not commanded in the Scriptures, and is consequently not a sacrament.--This differs from Roman Catholic teaching that the Sacrament of Penance is commanded both in Scripture and tradition.

(c) Absolution must be heard in faith. Without faith in Christ man is not absolved.--This is opposed to Roman teaching that faith is to believe the teachings of the Church, and that absolution works ex opere operato if man has attrition (or contrition), makes a complete confession, and makes satisfaction as ordered by the priest.

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[1] Harms, op. cit., p. 52.

(d) When a man has faith, the center of Private Confession is absolution. All other aspects are submitted to this principle.--This differs from the Roman teaching which maintains that all parts of the Sacrament of Penance must be fulfilled.

(e) Accepted in faith, absolved sin is a forgotten sin.--This is opposed to Roman teaching which says that absolution is dependent on whole confession and complete satisfaction.

(f) The wording of the declared absolution (Absolution-formula) is of minor importance as long as it states that God forgives. The direct, declared formula in some form or another is recommended.--This is opposed to Roman teaching that the formula always must remain as determined by the Church.

(g) The practice of Private Confession is voluntary. Man has the permission and privilege to use it. (However, it must be admitted that Luther is very close to compulsory confession by including examination in the practice of Private Confession.)--This differs from Roman teaching that confession to a priest must be made at least once a year.

(h) The purpose of Private Confession is to comfort man in need and to assure him of God's forgiveness; this is performed by the pastor or a Christian friend.--This is opposed to Roman teaching setting up the priest as a judge.

(i) In confession of his sins to another, man is advised to confess what is difficult and troubling his conscience; all sins neither can nor need be confessed.--This differs from Roman teaching which maintains that all offences and sinful thoughts must be told.

(j) God justifies man by faith alone, there is no merit gained in confessins sins.--This is opposed to Roman teaching that the Sacrament of Penance is a deed which gains merit.

(k) Private Confession is under the seal of confession; nothing can be told to other persons.--This same rule is taught by the Roman Church.

(l) Private Confession (or Public Confession) does not have to be practiced prior to Holy Communion, but is recommended.--This is opposed to Roman teaching requiring the Sacrament of Penance before participating in the Eucharist.

(m) The Word of God offers absolution. This word is encountered in sermon, in teaching, in the Sacraments, and in the acts of absolution. The Word is above the Power of the Keys, which is nothing but the Word in function; offering of absolution, Private Confession is entirely in the service of the Gospel, not of the Law.--This differs from Roman teaching that the Power of the Keys is given to the Church (the Pope) which can establish new doctrines from tradition as well as the Word. The Power of the Keys stands above the Word.

In considering Luther's teaching about Private Confession, this last point may be considered most relevant to our time. If so, Luther felt the same because he concluded his eighth sermon in Wittenberg[1] thus:

> "For our God is not so miserly that He has left us with only one comfort or strengthening for our conscience, or

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[1] W 10, III -- SL 20. Eight sermons preached in Wittenberg in 1522, the last about Private Confession. The quotation follows translation in Works of Martin Luther, II, op. cit., 424f.

one absolution, but we have many absolutions in the Gospel, and are showered richly with them.

"For instance, we have this in the Gospel: 'If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.' Another comfort we have in the Lord's Prayer: 'Forgive us our trespasses,' etc. A third is our baptism. . . . After that we have the Private Confession, when I go and receive a sure absolution as if God Himself spake it, so that I may be assured that my sins are forgiven. Finally I take to myself the blessed sacrament, when I eat His body and drink His blood as a sign that I am rid of my sins and God has freed me from all my frailties. . . . Thus we see that confession must not be despised, but that it is a true comfort. And since we need many absolutions and comforts, because we must fight against the devil, death, hell and sin, we must not allow any of our weapons to be taken away, but keep intact the whole armor and equipment which God has given us for use against our enemies. For you do not know what work it is to fight with the devil and overcome him. . . . If only you knew him, you would not in this manner drive out confession.

"I commend you to God. Amen."

PART TWO

SOME EVIDENCE OF PRIVATE CONFESSION IN THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN LUTHERANISM

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

In American Lutheranism the most extensive work concerning Private Confession seems to be an extended article published in 1951 in the periodical Una Sancta.[1] It is a translation of parts of Wilhelm Löhe's German booklet Simple Instruction in Confession, written more than sixty years ago. In a note[2] the translator says that the minor sacrament of Repentance has almost entirely disappeared from the Lutheran Church in America. Published before Lent, he continues recommending Private Confession to the readers, and presents Löhe's article as a good expression of its value.

One may draw three implications from this fact: firstly that Private Confession is neglected in American theological discussion; secondly that a relationship between American and European Lutheranism is still felt; thirdly that interest in Private Confession has not been lost.

To present the history of Private Confession in American Lutheranism is an extremely complicated, if not an impossible endeavor. To do so one would have to study every collection of papers and reports written by Lutheran pastors in the country. Some reports would have to be located in Europe since many pastors in colonial times were sent from abroad. The result of such a project might furnish sufficient data for a presentation.

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[1] Wilhelm Löhe, "Simple Instruction in Confession. For Christians of the Evangelical Lutheran Communion," trans. by Delvin E. Ressel, Una Sancta, X (1951), No. 2, pp. 1-9; No. 3, pp. 10-23.

[2] Ibid., No. 2, p. 1.

The task, however, goes far beyond the intention of this dissertation. On the other hand one cannot entirely overlook the period between the Reformation and the present time. To give at least some evidence of Private Confession in the history of American Lutheranism, the following approach is taken:

The historical development of Private Confession in European Lutheranism must be traced because this is the background of American Lutheran churches. Furthermore, the place of Private Confession in American Lutheran thought will be stated, i.e., discussion of the few examples where Private Confession has been practiced among Lutherans in this country. Finally, mention will be made of the confessional struggle, assuming the official Lutheran attitude toward Private Confession rests to some extent on its confessional basis (i.e., to what extent the whole or parts of the Book of Concord are normative).

In the following chapter an examination of an extensive selection of American Lutheran handbooks and worship materials is presented. Regarding the question whether Private Confession was known among clergy and lay people in the past, one may get a positive or negative answer by looking into pastors' service books and agenda,[1] hymnbooks used by congregations, and the catechism of Luther which was memorized by children and adolescents.

The results of this examination claim to be only indicative, but some will be confirmed in the statistical data of Part Three.

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[1] "The name Agenda (things to be done) is given, particularly in the Lutheran Church, to the official books dealing with the forms and ceremonies of divine service," New SH, I, 84.

CHAPTER IV

HISTORICAL REFERENCES TO PRIVATE CONFESSION

A. European Background.

1. The Formative Period of the Reformation.[1]

Luther and his contemporaries introduced examination as a part of Private Confession, since both were preparatory to the Lord's Supper.[2] This became common practice, even though there were examples where Private Confession was used without Holy Communion afterwards.[3] Klaus Harms shows in detail that most church-orders (Kirchenordnungen) of this period follow the rule that nobody attend the Lord's Supper without previous examination.[4] Frequently a special service called Preparation was observed for Private Confession and examination preceding Holy Communion. This was usually on Saturday,[5] but sometimes even on Sunday morning.[6] The pastor would make additional appointments if necessary to hear those for whom there was no time at the designated period. The church building was commonly used as the place for Private Confession and examination. Some used the sacristy, others a confessional chair, in still others the pastor stood before the altar with the penitent kneeling before him.[1]

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[1] Cf. New SH, VII, 79f. which speaks of five periods in European Lutheranism: (1) The pentecostal or formative period of the Reformation, from 1517 to 1580; (2) The period of polemical orthodoxy, from 1580 to 1689; (3) The period of pietism, from 1689; (4) The period of rationalism, from the middle of the 17th century; (5) The period of revival of Evangelical theology, from 1817.

[2] Cf. *supra*, pp. 120ff.

[3] *Ibid.* Kliefoth, *Die Beichte und Absolution* (Schwering, 1856), pp. 357f., gives a few examples where he finds this was practiced.

[4] Harms, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-73.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 56.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 56f.

A similar development occurred in the Scandinavian countries. As early as 1530 Peder Laurensson, a Danish Lutheran, took the same view of Private Confession as Luther did. A man who was disturbed about his spiritual state was urged to confess to a pastor or another sensible man.[2] The Danish Church Order of 1539, and a similar one for Norway, did not combine Private Confession and Holy Communion.[3] It was understood that the minister had to know a person before admitting him to the Lord's Supper, and if the pastor was in any doubt, an examination had to take place. This examination was also called Private Confession. The pastor was expected to examine the applicant on the meaning of Holy Communion, its use, why he desired the Lord's Supper, and his knowledge of Luther's catechism.[4] In his evaluation of this period Gulbrandsen concludes that "the pedagogical aspect became the main one in the practice of Private Confession."[5] Aake Andrén confirms the same for Sweden.[6]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 57ff.

[2] McNeill, op. cit., p. 181, quoting E. H. Dunkley, The Reformation in Denmark (London, 1948).

[3] Birger Gulbrandsen, Nattverden i Norsk Kirkeliv (Oslo: Dybwad, 1948), p. 59.

[4] Ibid., p. 54.

[5] Ibid., p. 59.

[6] Aake Andren, Nattvardsberedelsen i Reformationstidens Svenska Kyrkoliv (Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans Diakonstyrelsens Bokförlag, 1952).

He is of the opinion that the original Lutheran understanding of Private Confession has directed two errors: It opposes those who claim confession is compulsory, by insisting that confession is by its nature free. Against those who forbid the practice of confession, it is regarded as a gift from God.[1] Here again Private Confession was not necessarily combined with Holy Communion. In a church order from 1571, Archbishop Petri states some of a bishop's duties: "Likewise also the Bishop shall have the oversight of the common folk, that they diligently apply themselves to the word of God, make the right use of the Sacraments, learn the Catechism, receive Absolution in Private Confession. . . ."[2]

2. The Period of Orthodoxy.

After the Book of Concord was published and generally accepted in 1580,[3] the Lutheran Church moved into a period of Orthodoxy, or a period of conformity with the prevailing doctrines.[4] The Word of God became supreme, and was heard mainly in the preached sermons. This was cura generalis, public care of souls. Cura specialis, private soul-care, was considered a part of the public service, offered only to the single member. Thus even private care of souls became generally a teaching of Christianity, of doctrines, and of catechism.

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[1] Ibid., p. 37.

[2] Eric E. Yelverton, An Archbishop of the Reformation (London, 1958). Laurentius Petri was born in 1499, and was bishop from 1531 to 1573.

[3] Cf. supra, pp.51f.

[4] Definition given in New S.H., VIII, 277.

It was a limited ministry of visitations and a "rather mechanical practice of Private Confession, on the basis of the catechism, and with one of the many absolution forms locally used, for which a fee was paid to the pastor."[1] In a survey of the practice during this period, August Tholuck finds an old saying: "The binding key is quite rusted away while the loosing key is in full operation."[2]

Negative statements that Orthodoxy was a period of dead literalism, are probably right. However, there certainly were many exceptions. Outstanding books in pastoral care were written by men like Paul Tarnov in De sacrosancto ministerio, The Sacred Ministry, 1624; Chr. Scriver in Sjele-skatt, Treasure of the Soul, 1750; John Gerhard in Loci communes, 1610-1629; and Johannes Quenstedt in Ethica pastorum et instructio cathedralis, Pastor's Ethics and Pastoral Instruction, 1678. Emphasis is put on the practice of Private Confession and the pastoral aspect is the foremost concern.

Theodore Tappert writes in a recent American book[3] that church services in the time of Orthodoxy were well attended, and "three or four times a year most people were accustomed to go to private confession and receive Communion."[4] It is true that Private Confession was increasingly combined with examination, but this does not mean that it was necessarily mechanical. A church book from Leipzig in the middle of the eighteenth century[1] includes a section on Private Confession in the second part.[2] This section builds on several orders from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[3] Here the obligation that any man coming to Private Confession must show a knowledge of Christianity before being admitted to Holy Communion is stressed. If the pastor finds him with insufficient knowledge, he is to use the ten commandments in this way:

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[1] McNeill, op. cit., p. 182.

[2] August Tholuck, Das kirchliche Leben des siebzehnten Jahrhunderts, Vols. I and II (Berlin, 1861-62), quoting McNeill, op. cit., p. 182.

[3] Theodore G. Tappert, "Orthodoxism, Pietism, and Rationalism." Article in Christian Social Responsibility, ed. by Harold C. Letts, Vol. II; The Lutheran Heritage (Philadelphia; Muhlenberg Press, 1957).

[4] Ibid., p. 50.

> "The minister says: Dear friend. Do you know the ten commandments, and what God claims that every man has to do? If he answers: No, sir, I am sorry but I don't know. . . Then the confessor shall say: Dear friend. Not even knowing the ten commandments it is quite sure that you have not in any way been able to live according to them. . . etc. etc. One has to remember that only by knowing the will of God, any man can have some understanding of his sins. Further, if a man does not understand his sins, then he neglects Christ! Only when this condition [knowing the Law of God] is fulfilled, one [the pastor] can comfort him and declare absolution."[4]

Different interpretations and evaluations may be given this practice. However, the best interpretation found both from a pastoral and a theological viewpoint, is given by an unknown author in 1839.[1] Based on several church orders mentioned above,[2] and especially on the order from Braunschweig-Lüneburg 1615,[3] the intention of combining examination and Private Confession is stated in six points[4]:

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[1] Kirchenbuch (Leipzig, 1771).

[2] "Von der Beichte und Privatcommunion," with subtitle, "Wie mit den Leuten in der Beichte zu handeln."

[3] Especially are mentioned: Brandenburg 1540; Mecklenberg 1552; Wittenberg 1559 and 1565; Frankfurt 1565; Holstein 1614; Kurf. Aug. von Sachsen 1624.

[4] Ibid., p. 472. The translation from German is by the author.

a. When a man desires Private Confession, he must confess his sins, his belief in God, how strong his faith is, and his intention to improve. On the strength of these the pastor will know if he is to bind or to loose.

b. The pastor must see if the man lacks knowledge. If this is the case, knowledge comes through the Word through which God creates true penitence.

c. If the pastor sees that the erring one (Schäflein) is rooted in sin, the best punishment is the Word of God.

d. When the penitent is anxious, he should be comforted from the Word.

e. If this is done, no man will go unworthily to the Lord's Supper.

f. By doing so, man has made true confession upon which he receives private absolution.[5]

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[1] *Sammlung liturgischer Formulare der Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche* (Nördlingen, 1839).

[2] *Supra*, p. 134, note 3.

[3] *Kirchen Ordnung von Braunschweig-Lüneburg 1615*.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 25f.

[5] On the following pages examples are given of questions and answers about sin, the commandments, intentions, faith etc. Several formula of absolution are stated, all of them having the declared form, i.e., "I declare unto you," "I absolve you," etc.

Church orders combine examination and Private Confession,[1] but do not identify them. Examination has the single purpose of ascertaining that the confessee knows the will of God since only then does he know what sin is. Pastoral concern is not excluded with this approach, and examination points forward to true confession and absolution. Since Private Confession was one of the primary means in the care of souls, it was often recommended from the pulpit.[2]

The practice in Scandinavia was similar to Lutheran practice in other countries. According to Federal law, everyone taking part in the Communion, had to go to Private Confession.[3] If his conscience troubled him, a parishioner had to see the pastor several days prior to Communion Sunday.[4] The penitent was to kneel before the pastor,[5] who was to decide if he should be admitted to the table.

"Communion of the Sick" seems to have been practiced from the time of the Reformation. However, no early liturgy was written. Wilhelm Loehe quotes a rule about this given as early as 1533: "No special form is given, but every pastor shall try to do it right."[6] During the period of Orthodoxy, "Communion of the Sick" was widely practiced. A series of forms was written, however, and the pastor was free to use the one he preferred.[1] One may assume with Loehe that Private Confession was used,[2] since Holy Communion had to be preceded by confession.

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[1] Cf. Harms, _op. cit._, pp. 64-73.

[2] _Kirchen-Ordnung_ (Weimar, 1664), Chap. 13, pp. 362-368, stresses that the congregation frequently shall be told about the benefit of Private Confession.

[3] Gulbrandsen, _op. cit._, p. 68. The official rite of 1685 in Norway stated this in law form. Cf. Kacre Støylen, "Trekk til belysning av skriftemaalets historie," _Norsk Teologisk Tidsskrift_, XLIV (1943), 1-21.

[4] _Ibid._

[5] _Ibid._

[6] Wilhelm Loehe, _Agenda für christliche Gemeinden_ (3rd ed.; Nördlingen, 1884), Part Two, p. 89.

Examination and Private Confession were time consuming, and in larger congregations the pastor could not perform it satisfactorily.[3] Voices were soon raised in opposition to the established practice. In 1644 Christian Hohburg published a book[4] against the misuse of absolution, emphasizing that absolution was declared to everyone regardless of attitude or lack of penance. One could know the catechism and participate in the written formula of confession, but this did not prove a thing![5] Men like Mueller,[6] Quistorp,[7] and Grossgebauer[8] gave similar warnings. Pastors of larger parishes had no possibility of fulfilling the intention of Private Confession and examination. As a part of discipline, church courts were recommended[1] for the examining of people to determine whether they had the necessary insight into Christianity, and to judge offenders. From a theological view Grossgebauer fought for the position that one could do without the established forms of examination and Private Confession. If a man repented of his sins, he had forgiveness from God; is he did not repent, the declared absolution by the pastor did not help him.[2]

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[1] Cf. Loehe, op. cit., pp. 53f. and 89f.; New S.H., VII, 39.

[2] Loehe, loc. cit.

[3] New S.H., III, 222.

[4] Elias Prätorius (pseudonym), Spiegel der Missbräuche beim Predigampt im heutigen Christenthumb, quoted from Harms, op. cit., p. 73.

[5] Ibid., p. 74.

[6] Cf. Ibid., pp. 74f. Heinrich Mueller was pastor and professor in Rostock.

[7] Cf. ibid., pp. 76-78. Johann Quistorp was a professor in Rostock, and published a book in 1659, Pia Desideria.

[8] Cf. ibid., pp. 78-84. Theophilus Grossgebauer was also a professor and pastor in Rostock. His main book was published in 1661, called Wächterstimme.

As opposition grew, Private Confession was increasingly replaced by Public Confession[3] which had been in use from the beginning of the Reformation.[4] In Saxony, Public Confession became general practice after 1657. Other parts of the Lutheran world soon followed suit.[5] However, the strongest opposition against Private Confession occurred in the next period, under the leadership of Pietism.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 84f.

[2] Ibid., p. 82.

[3] Public Confession means confession of sins made by the whole congregation in connection with a service, followed by the pastor's absolution on behalf of God. Public Confession is often called General Confession.

[4] Cf. supra, pp. 116ff.

[5] New S. H., III, 222.

3. The Period of Pietism.

The founder of Lutheran Pietism was Phillip Jakob Spener.[1] In 1675 he published Pia Desideria,[2] which attracted wide attention and is regarded as a basic book of the Pietist movement. The main content of his book is that all believers belong to the spiritual priesthood. As such they are responsible for each other in instruction, care, exhortation, edifying, and discipline. Mere knowledge is not adequate for being a Christian. His faith must be shown in life and action. From this starting point Spener criticized the established practice of Private Confession as a compulsory preparation for Holy Communion.[3] From his own and others' experiences he knew that a pastor could possibly hear about fifteen confessions a day.[4] However, the task was impossible when a parish had as many as 30,000 members. Even in small congregations of a few hundred people, a conscientious pastor could not decently fulfill his duties. Private Confession had become superficial, people confessed their sins according to a written confession, and the pastor absolved as many as twenty every hour.[5] However,

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[1] Spener was born in Alsace in 1635, and died in 1705. He graduated from Strasburg in 1653, spent three years after 1659 mainly in Switzerland where he was impressed by Reformed discipline. He served as a pastor in Strasburg (1663), Frankfort (1666), Dresden (1686), and Berlin (1691). For details of his life, cf., e.g., New S.H., IX, 53-57.

[2] Full title: Zu dem Einfluss der Wächterstimme auf die Pia Desideria. "Pia Desideria" in English is: "Pious Longings."

[3] Cf. Harms, op. cit., pp. 87-98 for a thorough discussion on Spener.

[4] Ibid., pp. 85 and 91.

[5] Ibid., p. 91.

Spener did not advocate that people go to the Lord's Supper without preparation. Since the use of Private Confession and examination in the established form could not be defended, he recommended another solution: the week prior to Holy Communion, people should come to the pastor's house and announce that they intended to participate. A confession need not be made in this connection, and no absolution declared.[1] To maintain church discipline, he suggested that a board of elders assist the pastor.[2] The results of his efforts were that he found difficulty in effectively promoting these operations on a large scale, and it must be concluded that "Spener's influence on confession and ecclesiastical discipline was little more than negative."[3]

Still he did not disregard Private Confession as such. In cases where a man needed the comfort of absolution, Private Confession was most valuable.[4] Spener chose to use the conditional absolution,[5] i.e., that the absolution was dependent upon the confessee's real penitence. Again, however, it ought to be stressed that Spener would not do away with the benefit of Private Confession. Harms writes in a recent article[6] that

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[1] Ibid., p. 94.

[2] Cf. New S.H., IX, 56.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Cf. Harms, op. cit., pp. 88f.

[5] H. Fuglsang-Damgaard, "Privatskriftemaalet," Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift, XV (1939), 40-56.

[6] Klaus Harms, "Die Einzelbeichte," Monatschrift für Pastoraltheologie, XLII (1953), 374-384.

Pietism was not opposed to Private Confession as a means in the care of souls. The opposition was against compulsory Private Confession, and against "examination which had come in, changing the character [of Private Confession] to examinations and coercion, quite similar to [Catholic] Auricular Confession [Ohrenbeichte]."[1]

The educational influence of August Hermann Francke[2] played an even greater role in Pietism than did Spener. Spener influenced Francke to come to Berlin in 1692, and the following year Francke began teaching at the University of Halle. Francke had large audiences at the University during many years of teaching in his Latin School founded in 1697, and in a Bible Institute founded in 1710. From these thousands of young men brought Pietism to all parts of the Lutheran world. Francke's writings were numerous, but they are characterized as "relatively unimportant."[3] Kurt Aland's study of Francke's books and articles has lead him to conclude that Francke, like Spener, was opposed to the established compulsory Private Confession.[4] According to Aland, four reasons forced Francke to take this position: Private Confession has become mechanical and external[5]; this practice has as its presupposition, a false understanding of Private Confession[1]; the primary blame for corruption in the practice of Private Confession lies in the confessors themselves (Beichtvätern selbst)[2]; the confessors and the confessees lack true penitence and remorse.[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 383.

[2] August Hermann Francke was born at Lübeck in 1663, and died at Halle in 1727. Graduated in 1685 in Leipzig, he continued his studies until 1689, worked as a pastor the following year when Spener asked him to come to Berlin in 1692. Cf. RGG, II, 1013-1015.

[3] New S.H., IV, 368.

[4] Kurt Aland, "August Hermann Francke und die Privatbeichte," Monatschrift für Pastoraltheologie, XLV, 272-285.

[5] Ibid., p. 273.

Neither Spener, nor Francke brought the matter of established Private Confession to a crisis in Lutheran practice. The crisis was created by Spener's pupil, Johann Caspar Schade. A pastor in Berlin from 1691, he was sincere, eager, and pious in his work.[4] He felt his pastoral duties overwhelming, especially the obligation to examine and conduct Private Confession among his parishioners. In 1696 he published an anonymous booklet,[5] in which he attacked the institution of Private Confession. In describing Private Confession, he went so far as to say, "Like it, everyone who cares! I say: Confessional chair /Is/ the Devil's chair, /and a/ cistern of Hell (Beichtstuhl, Satansstuhl, Feuerpfuhl)!"[6] Spener did not know about the publication in advance and when he discovered it he tried, in vain, to suppress it.[7] Not until a year later did Schade announce from his pulpit that he was the author when he began to take his parishioners into his sacristy for common confession. They knelt before Schade who led in general confession, gave advice, and absolved everyone at the same time.[1]

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[1] Ibid., p. 275.

[2] Ibid., p. 276.

[3] Ibid., p. 279.

[4] Harms, op. cit., pp. 98f.

[5] Ibid., p. 100.

[6] Ibid., p. 101.

[7] Ibid.

This incident created much unrest and opposition. However, the idea was supported by many people, and the elector of Brandenburg actually abandoned the usage of compulsory Private Confession in 1698.[2] The example appealed to Lutherans in Scandinavia and Upper Germany,[3] and during the following years similar laws were issued to almost the entire Lutheran world.[4] Private Confession was not compulsory before Holy Communion, but the practice that every communicant must take part in a general confession before the Lord's Supper was observed.[5] Instead of examining and hearing the individual, a confessionary sermon was introduced by the pastor.[6]

The liberty attached to the practice of Private Confession resulted in a widespread neglect of any practice whatsoever. When Peder Hersleb was the bishop of Oslo during the first part of the eighteenth century, he observed that Private Confession was not practiced at all in his diocese, and he added that this observation applied to the whole of Norway.[7]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] New S.H., III, 222.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Harms, op. cit., pp. 107-122 gives details about the development in Germany. Cf. New S.H., III, 222 for other countries.

[5] New S.H., III, 222.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Gulbrandsen, op. cit., p. 78.

On the other hand in a few places, Private Confession maintained a strong position. Kliefoth found that the church in Mecklenburg never abolished the established practice.[1] Finnish Pietism used Private Confession as the primary means of pastoral care and church discipline.[2] Martti Simojoki states as the goal of Finnish Pietism: "The goal for the private care of souls is regarded to be private confession followed by absolution."[3]

4. The Period of Rationalism.

Pietism was not alone in changing the practice of Private Confession. In this respect it was supported by Rationalism[4] which gained popularity at the same time as did Pietism. The motivation, however, was quite different. While Pietism had a deep concern for the care of souls and man's relation to Christ, Rationalism stressed education. Köstlin says about Rationalism: "The care of souls is more ethical influence, education; the Church is doing it, but it is a part of common public education."[5] Thus the tendency to get rid of the compulsory, established Private Confession, was favoured from almost every church direction. Private Confession remained as a pastoral means in the care of souls, but being almost neglected by

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[1] Cf. New S.H., III, 222.

[2] Martti Simojoki, "Grunnlinjer i den Finske Pietismes sjelesorg," Tidsskrift for Teologi og Kirke, XXVI, 117-127.

[3] Ibid., p. 126.

[4] Cf. Harms, op. cit., p. 110. For details in the development, cf. Harms. op. cit., pp. 110-132.

[5] H. A. Köstlin, Die Lehre von der Seelsorge (Berlin, 1907), p. 142.

Rationalism, and used only to a small extent by Pietism, the practice declined. McNeill is, therefore, probably right in concluding: "It /Private Confession/ had been almost wholly abandoned before the nineteenth century revival."[1]

5. Attempts of Revival in the Nineteenth Century.

There were men who in their pastoral concern for Lutheranism, regretted the widespread abolition of Private Confession. Schleiermacher[2] greatly influenced theological thought and practice. He gave attention to different aspects in the care of souls, and his followers soon recommended the use of Private Confession. In 1814 Marheineke spoke of Private Confession as "a conversation with God in the presence of the pastor."[3] Three years later Klaus Harms wanted to restore Private Confession as part of a large movement by the congregations for the spiritual care of fellow men.[4] One of the most important men in the revival of Private Confession was probably Wilhelm Loehe,[5] known also for his influence on American Lutheranism.[6]

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[1] McNeill, op. cit., p. 185.

[2] Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher was born in 1768 in Breslau, died in Berlin in 1834. As pastor, theologian, and philosopher he had a tremendous influence, and is today regarded as one of the greatest men in Lutheranism.

[3] Philipp K. Marheineke, Aphorisms for the Renewing of Church Life, quoted McNeill, op. cit., p. 186.

[4] Cf. McNeill, op. cit., p. 186; also Harms, op. cit., pp. 123f. The Klaus Harms in the nineteenth century must not be identified with the twentieth century Harms.

[5] Johann Konrad Wilhelm Loehe was born in 1808 outside Nuremberg, and died in 1872 in Neuendettelsau. He was a strict orthodox Lutheran, an able preacher, productive writer, effective organizer, and a great pastor. Cf. J. Deinzer, Wilhelm Löhes Leben, I-III (Gütersloh, 1874-92).

[6] Cf. infra, pp. 208f.

Loehe introduced Private Confession in his parish in Neuendettelsau. He made reference to Private Confession in his sermons, and received the penitents in the church, usually on certain hours every Saturday. He had great authority and did not hesitate to inquire about sin and guilt. The absolution he declared was felt by the confessee as being "especially intensive."[1] It is rightly said about Loehe that in his hearing of confession, he "opened a rich source of pastoral advice and consolation to his parishioners."[2] Loehe's concern is expressed in his *Agenda*,[3] The first edition was dedicated to two pastors, one of whom was Fr. Wyneken in St. Louis. In the second part of the complete *Agenda* is found a section of Private Confession.[4] In his preface, Loehe writes:

> "Every Christian, who wants to go to the Lord's Table, must tell his confessor, and come to the Confessional chair on Saturday. Here he has to confess his sins, either common expressions, or in details, confessing the special sins for which he wants to receive the comfort of absolution. The confessor must, when he finds it necessary, teach and comfort the confessee . . . . When he [the confessor] is sure [that absolution should be declared], he absolves by laying on his hands."[5]

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[1] Erik Berggren, *Till den Kristna Biktens Psykologi* (Stockholm, 1946), pp. 52f. Cf. also J. Deinzer, *op. cit.*, p. 164: "wie gingen sie [diese hohen Gottesworte] den Seelen ein, lindernder als Oel und Balsam erfrischender als Thau. . . ."

[2] Homer Reginald Greenholt, quoted McNeill, op. cit., p. 187.

[3] Wilhelm Loehe, *Agenda für christliche Gemeinden des lutherischen Bekenntnisses* (Nördlingen, 1853).

[4] The oldest copy I have been able to find in the United States, is the third edition of 1884. Private Confession appears on pp. 53-56.

[5] Loehe, *op. cit.* (3rd ed.; Nördlingen, 1884), second part, p. 53.

Loehe's theological and practical basis of confession and absolution is expressed in a booklet, Einfaltiger Beichtunterricht.[1] He lists these in thirty-two points.[2] In his discussion of "Which sins to confess,"[3] Loehe calls the confessor "a physician of the soul,"[4] to whom the confessee never will hesitate to come if he once has learned the benefit of confession and absolution. "From this it is also clear that confession should not take place before Holy Communion only, but also at other times, as often as your heart yearns for it,[1] even as a Christian heart should also yearn often for the Holy Meal which is the seal of the Absolution."[2]

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[1] Wilhelm Loehe, Einfaltiger Beichtunterricht (4th ed.; Neuen-Dettelsau, 1900). Parts of the booklet are translated into English by Delvin E. Ressel, "The Sacrament of Repentance," Una Sancta, X (1951), No. 2, pp. 1-9 and No. 3, pp. 10-23.

[2] Loehe's theology can be seen in the headings he gives the different points. The first sixteen statements are about confession: 1) What is meant by Confession; 2) Without a Knowledge of Sin there can be no Confession of Sin; 3) Knowledge of Sin comes from the Law of the Lord; 4) In your Self-examination Remember the Sins of Omission; 5) Most People do not want to examine Themselves live on securely; 6) First Proof that Those who feel no Sin are Sinners nevertheless: the Flesh; 7) Second Proof: the Evil of the World; 8) Third Proof: the Temptation of the Devil; 9) Fourth Proof: the Passion of Christ; 10) One cannot Know All of his Sins, but the Knowledge of Sin grows from Day to Day into Eternity; 11) One cannot repent of All Sins; 12) Confession without Repentance is reprehensible; 13) There are three Kinds of Confession; 14) Of Confession to God; 15) Of Confession to the Neighbor; 16) Of Confession to the Father Confessor.

The last sixteen statements are about absolution: 17) What is Absolution; 18) Who gives Holy Absolution; 19) How Manifold is the Office of the Keys; 20) Scriptural Basis; 21) Power of the Keys Given to the Church of all Times; 22) Whether Men may Pronounce Absolution of Sins; 23) Why Particular Absolution, Since Forgiveness of Sins is Already Assured in the Holy Scripture and in Evangelical Sermons; 24) Salutary Combination of Public and Private Confession and Absolution; 25) Value of the Power of the Keys; 26) Justification and Absolution in Harmony; 27) Who Is to Be Absolved; 28) Reconciliation with All Men, Preparation for Absolution; 29) Also Restitution of Unlawful Goods, Payment of Earthly Debt is Preparation for Absolution; 30) Also Intention to Lead a New Life Is Necessary Preparation for the Absolution; 31) How Often and by Which Physician of Souls Should One be Absolved; 32) The Binding Key.

[3] Loehe, op. cit., pp. 5f.

[4] Ibid., p. 6.

A contemporary of Loehe was Johann Christoph Blumhardt,[3] known for his pastoral work among the sick at Bad Boll.[4] Frequently using absolution with the laying on of hands, his methods were known all over Germany. Within theological circles C. Ackermann ought also to be mentioned. At a Church-Council at Bremen in 1852, he highly recommended the practice of Private Confession.[5]

To what extent Loehe and the others succeeded, is not clear. Kliefoth[6] was certainly negative in 1856: "In modern theology confession and absolution have been reduced to preparation for Holy Communion; the absolution, which was the main concern in our old church's theology concerning confession and absolution, is quite unknown in modern theology."[7] This may have been an overstatement. Neither the Lutheran churches in Germany nor the theologians had forgotten Private Confession.

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[1] Underlining done by the author.

[2] Ibid., p. 6.

[3] J. C. Blumhardt was born at Stuttgart in 1805, died at Bad Boll in 1880.

[4] A good account of Blumhardt is given in F. Zündel, Johann Christoph Blumhardt (Giessen, 1926).

[5] Cf. Harms, op. cit., pp. 127f.

[6] Th. Kliefoth, Die Beichte und Absolution (Schwering, 1856).

[7] Ibid., pp. 2f.

By the turn of the century Fr. Niebergall brought forward the solution which seemed to be inevitable: Holy Communion without Confession (neither Public nor Private); Confession without Holy Communion.[1] This did not mean confession could not be followed by Communion, but that they did not have to be connected. The Scandinavian countries followed a similar pattern. The Finnish movement of Laestadianism[2] practiced Private Confession as did all Finnish Pietism. Private Confession was never compulsory prior to Holy Communion.[3] In other countries the ties between confession and communion were also disregarded.[4] By the beginning of our century, few, if any, places in Europe had compulsory Private Confession. The practice of it had declined to such a degree that Bishop Giertz could call it "A forgotten means of grace."[5]

Remarks

1. One area where Private Confession seems to have survived, is in "Communion of the Sick."[6] A special rite for

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[1] Cf. Harms, op. cit., pp. 130f.

[2] Laestadianism started in the 1840's. The movement is known in the United States as The Apostolic Lutheran Church in America. Cf. infra, pp. 163-166.

[3] For the doctrinal teaching of American Laestadianism, cf. Uuras Saarnivaara, The History of the Laestadian or Apostolic-Lutheran Movement in America (Ironwood, Mich: National Publishing Co., 1947), pp. 90-99, esp. pp. 92f.

[4] Cf. New S.H., III, 222; VIII, 194-196; III, 405f.; IV, 313-316; X, 120f.; XI, 174-183 for different countries. Norway, for example, passed a law in 1886 which entirely separated Holy communion from both compulsory Public (General) and Private Confession.

[5] Bo Giertz, op. cit., p. 163.

[6] Cf. supra, pp. 136f.

the pastoral act of giving the Holy Communion to sick parishioners can be found in almost every church order or agenda from the time of Pietism. The Lord's Supper is preceded by a confession of sins, usually in written form, with an opportunity for the sick to confess special sins.[1] The rite of "Communion of the Sick" has remained essentially unchanged inspite of opposition against compulsory Private Confession before Communion.

2. There are seemingly new efforts at the present time to revive Private Confession in Europe.[2] However, American Lutheranism is by now "independent." Paul Spaude's extensive study[3] shows how American Lutheranism has been influenced by sociological and other factors. If his observations are correct, European discussion and practice of Private Confession have little influence on the development of Lutheranism in this country.

The brief survey of the development in European Lutheranism has shown that Private Confession, mainly as combined with examination, was widely practiced until the eighteenth century when Pietism and Rationalism gained influence. Thereafter, the practice of Private Confession declined until it was no longer compulsory. There were a few attempts at revival during the last century, but without much success. Even so, Private Confession was never entirely discarded. In some districts and church bodies, the practice of Private Confession remained a means of pastoral care. Furthermore, it was generally in connection with "Communion of the Sick."

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[1] Some earlier American Lutheran Agenda, which usually were based on those of the European "mother-church," confirm this statement. Cf. Chap. V, A.

[2] Most noteworthy is the development in the German Lutheran churches. Cf. *RGG*, I, 972-976; and especially Christhard Mahrenholz, *Begleitwort Zu den Ordnungen Der Beichte und zu Der Handreichung zur Einzelbeichte* (Hannover, 1957).

[3] Paul W. Spaude, *The Lutheran Church under American Influence* (Burlington, Iowa: Lutheran Literary Board, 1943).

Since American Lutheranism followed rather closely European theology and practice until the turn of the last century, one might assume the same patterns were followed. Thus one may expect that Lutheran churches in the United States have disregarded compulsory Private Confession prior to Holy Communion. However, Private Confession, as a means of pastoral care, has probably remained in some districts and church bodies, depending on the background and theology of the specific church.

B. The Place of Private Confession in American Lutheran Thought.

It is very rare to find Private Confession discussed in church historical studies or writings in American Lutheranism. One reason for this is that Private Confession has seldom been a matter of discussion or disagreement.[1] However, there are two exceptions, one among the Norwegians; and another among the Laestadians of Finnish background. The intention of the following discussion is to mention the incidents where Private Confession is found to be of special concern in American Lutheran thought until the turn of this century, starting in the East, and then on to the Midwest. The Norwegians and the Laestadians will be discussed separately.

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[1] Cf. for example Doctrinal Declarations, A Collection of Official Statements on the Doctrinal Position of Various Lutheran Bodies in America (St. Louis: Concordia Publ. House, 1957), where absolution is stated as an item only once: The Minneapolis Thesis by the American Lutheran Conference in 1930, pp. 108f.

1. In the East.

The Swedes came to America early.[1] Settling in Delaware in 1638, their pastors were sent from Sweden until 1771.[2] Consequently it is not surprising that they practiced the same kind of Private Confession as Swedish Orthodoxy. Graebner[3] confirms this assumption by telling about pastor Gabrial Naesman, who in 1744 made it a practice to ask his parishioners: "if they would announce themselves for Confession, and if every one, who so desired, before Confession and Holy Communion, would come to the Pastor for proper education and examination."[4]

Henry Melchior Meuhlenberg is called the "patriarch of the Lutheran Church in North America."[5] At the request of Hermann Francke,[6] he accepted a call from Pennsylvania, and arrived there in 1742. From the Church Agenda of 1748[1] it is clear that Muehlenberg practiced General Confession assumingly as a preparation for the Lord's Supper. Jacobs writes in his church history[2] that Muehlenberg frequently scheduled Private Confession on Sunday morning.[3] McNeill referrs to a special visit in York, Pennsylvania, where Muehlenberg was engaged in the "private examining and hearing the confessions of the candidates for communion."[4] In his discussion of pastoral care, Wentz[5] says that repentance was commonly stressed from the pulpits of Muehlenberg and his contemporaries. Members coming to Holy Communion "were asked to announce their intention in person to the pastor a few days or weeks in advance so as to provide opportunity for a personal conference on the spiritual condition of the individual."[6]

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[1] For the history of early Swedish Lutheranism in America, cf. Israel Acrelius, History of New Sweden, trans. by W. M. Reynolds (Philadelphia, 1874).

[2] Pastor Nils Collin was the last Pastor sent from Sweden. Cf. New S.H., VII, 84.

[3] A. L. Graebner, Geschichte der Lutherischen Kirche in America (St. Louis: Concordia Publ. House, 1892).

[4] Ibid., p. 335.

[5] New S.H., VIII, p. 37.

[6] Cf. supra, p. 141.

In the nineteenth century, Private Confession under the European pattern, was practiced less and less. In 1852, S. S. Schmucker, a liberal, published The American Lutheran Church,[7] in which he recommended that several items in The Augsburg Confession be changed.[1] Among other things, he stated that Private Confession should be rejected.[2] He then observes that Private Confession already is rejected "universally in this country, except by the old Lutherans of the West."[3] Three years later he wrote the Definite Synodical Platform.[4] Private Confession is again rejected along with other "errors" in the Lutheran church.[5] His Platform was not accepted,[6] but it seems his observation concerning Private Confession was correct. In The Lutheran Quarterly, published by the theological seminary in Gettysburg, F. Springer writes in 1877[7] that Article XI in The Augsburg Confession[8] is a "remarkable exception" since it is not based on the Bible as are the other articles. He goes on:

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[1] Cf. infra, p. 200.

[2] Henry E. Jacobs, A History of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1893).

[3] Ibid., p. 228.

[4] McNeill, op. cit., p. 187.

[5] Abdel Ross Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism in America (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1955).

[6] Ibid., p. 61.

[7] S. S. Schmucker, The American Lutheran Church (Philadelphia: Miller, 1852).

> "Any movement among Protestants of the present day toward the re-establishment of Private confession and absolution, . . . will be regarded by large numbers of the most devout, intelligent, and active Christian worker, both lay and clerical, as a re-enactment of

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[1] Ibid., pp. 238f.

[2] Ibid., pp. 239f.

[3] Ibid., p. 240.

[4] The author's name does not occur on the pamphlet. While Jacobs merely says the pamphlet was anonymous (Jacobs, op. cit., p. 424), Wentz writes, in an earlier book, Abdel Ross Wentz, The Lutheran Church in American History (Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publ. House, 1923), p. 176, that Schmucker was the author. See also New S.H., X, 255.

[5] Cf. infra, pp. 178f.

[6] Ibid.

[7] The Lutheran Quarterly, VII (1877), 86f.

[8] The Augsburg Confession, Article XI, begins: "It is taught among us that private absolution should be retained and not allowed to fall into disuse."

> the heathenizing processes of the earlier centuries, when Romish errors first began."[1]

Springer probably felt that such a movement existed. About the same time an unknown author expresses concern for Private Confession in a pamphlet, "Absolution or Forgiveness of Sins,"[2] in which the value of Private Confession is praised, and the Lutheran basis for its practice is stated.[3] However, G. H. Gerberding is not far from Springer's position when he published The Lutheran Pastor in 1902.[4] By surrounding Private Confession with many reservations he, in fact, does not recommend it. Instead he prefers "a confidential interview with each communicant every three months."[5] Thus it is not surprising to read the observation in Memoirs of the Lutheran Liturgical Association[6] four years later: "In modern times it [confession and absolution] has degenerated to a simple service preparatory to the Lord's Supper and nothing more. This under--valuing of so important a service is a direct undervaluing of our Lutheran Reformation."[7]

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[1] Ibid., p. 89.

[2] J. H., "Absolution or Forgiveness of Sins," Tract No. 5 (Columbus: Lutheran Book Concern, 1880). The pamphlet was recommended by C. P. Krauth from the University of Pennsylvania in Lutheran and Missionary, June 10, 1880.

[3] Ibid., pp. 34-43.

[4] G. H. Gerberding, The Lutheran Pastor (Philadelphia, 1902).

[5] Ibid., quoted from McNeill, op. cit., p. 189.

[6] Memoirs of the Lutheran Liturgical Association, I-VI (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Publ. by the Association, 1906).

[7] Ibid., VI, 65.

2. In the Midwest.

Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther has had a similar influence among Lutherans in the Midwest,[1] as Muehlenberg had among those in the East. Coming to the United States from Saxony in 1839, he became the first president of the Missouri Synod. From the very beginning he had a wide influence, which increased after he became a directing professor of the theological seminary in St. Louis. He was also a productive writer. Walther always recommended the practice of Private Confession. According to A. C. Piepkorn, Walther urged all pastors to confess in private to another pastor in the same conference.[2] In the periodical founded by Walther, Der Lutheraner, statements can be found advocating a return to the practice of Private Confession: "The St. Louis Pastoral Conference in its minutes states that General Confession is un-Lutheran because, with few exceptions, it was not used in the Lutheran Church of the best period"[3]; "Rev. Keyl presents evidence that (1) Only Private Confession was in use during the best period of the Lutheran Church, and (2) examines the grounds upon which General Confession has been introduced, and the grounds upon which Private Confession has been rejected, and finds these grounds invalid.[4] Walther claimed freedom to use

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[1] For information about Walther, cf. for example, M. Guenther, C. W. F. Walther, Lebensbild (St. Louis, 1890).

[2] This information was given orally by Dr. A. C. Piepkorn, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in the fall of 1961.

[3] Der Lutheraner, IV (1847), 4. These quotations are submitted to the author by Dr. Piepkorn.

[4] Ibid., p. 15.

Private Confession as well as General (Public) Confession, and approved of Private Confession as late as 1872 in his American Lutheran Pastoral Theology.[1] The Missouri Synod, organized in 1872, established congregations all over the United States and became the largest and most influencial body in the Synodical Conference,[2] Thus Walther's ideas became widely known. However, it is difficult to state to what extent Private Confession was practiced. Friedrich Lochner[3] may be right in a preface he wrote to Private Confession in 1895: "in our time the practice of Private Confession has become a rare occurrence. . . ."[4] If this is right, then Private Confession also decreased in the most orthodox and conservative Lutheran circles.

What took place in the many smaller Lutheran church bodies concerning Private Confession cannot be established on the basis of published historical research. Historical details are also lacking from the larger Lutheran bodies.

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[1] C. F. W. Walther, Amerikanisch-lutherische Pastoral-Theologie (St. Louis, 1872).

[2] The Synodical Conference embraced the following synods: Missouri, Ohio, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, Michigan, and the Norwegian.

[3] Friedrich Lochner, Liturgische Formulare (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1895).

[4] Ibid., p. 138.

3. Among the Norwegians.

The earliest Norwegian settlement in America was established in 1825.[1] The next years a wide settlement in the Midwest took place. The birth date of the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America is September 1843. For two decades following, the Norwegians organized in several synods.[2] An interesting fact can be found in the constitution of the first synod.[3] The services and ministerial acts followed almost word for word the Altar-Book of the "mother church." However, concerning absolution, there is a change:

> "The Sacraments of Baptism and the Altar are administered according to the Ritual and Altar Book of the Church of Norway which we in all parts follow as far as the blessed doctrine is concerned. Nevertheless, the laying on of hands at Absolution is not used, since it cannot be seen from Holy Scriptures that Jesus and his apostles have used this at the Lord's Supper. . . ."[4]

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[1] For a comprehensive history of Norwegian Lutheranism in America, see E. Clifford Nelson and Eugene L. Fevold, The Lutheran Church among Norwegian-Americans, I (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1960); and E. Clifford Nelson, The Lutheran Church among Norwegian-Americans, II (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1960). In the following the first book will be referred to as Nelson-Felvold, the second as Nelson.

[2] Eielsens Synod 1846; Synod of Northern Illinois including several Norwegian congregations and pastors, 1851; The Norwegian Synod, 1853; Scandinavian Augustana Synod, 1860.

[3] The Old Constitution for The Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America, or the Eielsen Synod, 1846 and 1850. The constitution is quoted in Nelson-Fevold, op. cit., pp. 33-343.

[4] Ibid., p. 341. Gulbrandsen, op. cit., p. 86 is certainly right in stating that this fact was not rooted mainly in the Word of God, but was inherited from Pietism from Norway.

The first incident of disagreement about confession and absolution, dates back to 1849. Two Norwegians, Andrewson and Andersen, from the Eielsen Synod, sought affiliation with the Franckean Synod,[1] which adhered to views presented in the so-called "American Lutheranism" and The Definite Synodical Platform.[2] Andersen was ordained by the Franckeans, who, according to the great majority of Norwegians, had an un-Lutheran attitude. Unwilling to accept this judgment, Andersen answered that ceremonialism, including absolution which was nothing but a "child of the papacy,"[3] ought to be abandoned by the Lutherans. His ideas were met with strong opposition, and later he changed his mind.[4]

"The three decades 1860-1890 produced seemingly endless theological debates and bitter controversies among the Norwegian-American Lutherans."[5] The first disagreement was over the doctrine of absolution. A Norwegian-American professor from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis,[6] L. Larsen, gave a paper on absolution at the annual meeting in 1861 of the Norwegian Synod.[7] Built upon the thesis of a Missouri Synod pastor,

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[1] Nelson-Fevold, op. cit., pp. 132-136.

[2] Cf. supra, pp. 153f. , and infra, pp. 178f.

[3] From the newspaper Nordlyset (March 15, 1849), quoting Nelson-Fevold, op. cit., p. 136.

[4] Ibid., pp. 138f.

[5] Ibid., p. 241.

[6] The Norwegian Synod sent most of their future pastors to Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, for theological training.

[7] Nelson-Fevold, op. cit., p. 243.

T. J. Brohm,[1] Larsen defined absolution as "a powerful impartation of the forgiveness of sins."[2] There was immediately a controversy about offering absolution to believers only, which continued for years. Other areas of disagreement arose. These were taken before a large conference, composed of several synods, in 1883,[3] when the matter was partially settled by subscribing to a thesis concerning absolution.[4] The matter was again dealt with two years later at a joint meeting in Chicago,[5] at conferences in 1886, and finally expressed on the Eau Claire meeting in 1888[6]:

> "Concerning Absolution. . . . A supplemental explanation requested by a few was included because it drew a clear distinction between the subjective and objective aspects of absolution: it is always an offer of forgiveness and only an impartation of forgiveness when believed. Furthermore, the different liturgical practices in administering absolution ought not be considered divisive."[7]

The Hauge's Synod hesitated about union with the other Norwegian synods.[8] Being rather "low-church minded" stressing man's confrontation with the Word of God, the synod objected to any form of public confession and absolution. It was thought that this might give false comfort to unrepentant sinners. However, it was unnecessary to object to Private Confession. "Absolution by its very nature," said the Haugeans, "was a private and not a public ceremony and therefore, in its public and unconditional form, must be separated from the Lord's Supper."[1]

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[1] Loc. cit.

[2] Loc. cit.

[3] Ibid., p. 323.

[4] The conference took place in Roland, Iowa, with 165 delegates.

[5] Ibid., pp. 325f.

[6] Synods, representing almost all Norwegian-American churches, had delegates to the conference. Cf. Nelson, op. cit., pp. 1-11.

[7] Quoted from Nelson, op. cit., p. 7.

[8] Hauge's Synod was constituted in 1876 as a successor of the earlier Eielsen's Synod. However, some congregations and pastors continued the old synod, bearing Eielsen's name.

The first important merger of Norwegian synods occurred in 1890.[2] This body, The United Norwegian Lutheran Church, met with the Norwegian Synod and the Hauge's Synod in 1906 to discuss a merger for all of them.[3] The major achievement of these first meetings was the agreement on the doctrine of absolution.[4] In five theses, a unanimous view was presented. Absolution is "God's own absolving act through the ministry of the Word."[5] Absolution in itself is a real and valid absolution from God, but can only be appropriated in faith.[6] Finally it states that absolution is not meant to be an act of church discipline:

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[1] Nelson, op. cit., p. 128.

[2] The United Norwegian Lutheran Church was a merger of the so-called anti-Missourian Party of the Norwegian Synod, the Norwegian Augustana Synod, and the Norwegian-Danish Conference.

[3] The merger did not take place until 1917. The name of the new church was The Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, in 1947 changed to The Evangelical Lutheran Church.

[4] Nelson, op. cit., p. 144.

[5] Union Documents 1906, Part I: Absolution, thesis 1. Quoted from Nelson, op. cit., pp. 345f., where the documents can be found.

[6] Ibid., theses 2-4.

> "When it is stated in ecclesiastical language, and rightly so, that only the penitent should be absolved, it is not thereby meant that the one who administers the power of the keys is able to discern the hearts and to pass judgment on the spiritual condition of the person seeking to be absolved, but only that it is the duty of the ministry to give conscientious attention to the profession in word and deed on the part of the confessors lest the holy be given to the dogs and the pearls be cast before swine (Matt. 7:6)."[1]

In the constitution[2] for merger in 1917, the practical consequences of this view are expressed in the Articles of Union:

> "Public confession and absolution in connection with the Lord's Supper should be administered as determined by the congregations, either by declaring the forgiveness of sins to the individual by the laying on of hands or by a general declaration without the laying on of hands. Private confession and absolution shall be retained."[3]

A common practice of Private Confession was desired in an article by O. Turmo a few years later.[4] He discussed mainly absolution and its connection with Holy Communion, concluding that absolution and the Lord's Supper need not necessarily be combined.[5] He continues that confession and absolution ought also to be practiced without any connection with Communion. Especially since Private Confession is of great value in pastoral care, he wants it "re-established and in common use."[6]

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[1] Ibid., thesis 5.

[2] Constitution. The whole constitution is quoted in Nelson, op. cit., pp. 359-371.

[3] Ibid., Articles of Union, Chap. 4, Part C. Underlining by the author.

[4] O. Turmo, "Absolutionen, med saerlig henblik paa dens forbindelse med nadverden," Teologisk Tidsskrift, VII (1924), 81-94. Teologisk Tidsskrift is a publication from Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis.

[5] Ibid., p. 90.

[6] Ibid., p. 90.

It cannot be determined to what extent Private Confession was practiced among the Norwegian-Americans. However, due to the controversy about absolution over so long a period of time, the final result agreed upon, and the stress that Private Confession should be retained, it can be assumed that Private Confession was practiced at least to some extent.

4. Among the Laestadians.

The Laestadian movement has it name from Lars Levi Laestadius, a Finnish Lutheran ordained in 1825. About twenty years later, in connection with a visit to a Pietist "Readers" group in the Swedish Lapland, he experienced a revival. "His eyes were turned in faith to see Him who shed His blood for the atonement of his sins. The sun of grace began to shine into his heart and he experienced the foretaste of heaven."[1] A revival spread from his own parish in Kaaresuvanto, throughout the northern part of Finland, Sweden, and Norway,[2] the message being carried mostly by laymen. One of his followers was a teacher, Juhani Raattamaa. In Raattamaa's studies of Luther's Church Postil, he was especially struck by Luther's sayings about the Power of the Keys,[3] particularly when Luther advised that any Christian could lay his hand on a sinner and pronounce absolution, and that this was to be accepted as said by God himself. Raattamaa immediately started practicing absolution after having heard confession. Laestadius adopted the same practice in 1853 as an official teaching of the movement. "Justification does not take place in the heavenly forum only, but God pronounces his merciful, pardoning judgment in His Church on earth, through the mouth of His children. . . . Man cannot be reconciled with God in solitude. In this he needs help and service of Christians."[1] In the beginning, Public Confession was practiced, but some years later any compulsory Public Confession was rejected. Private Confession took its place. Confession of sins could be made to minister or layman, followed by a declared absolution with laying on of hands.[2]

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[1] Uuras Saarnivaara, The History of the Laestadian or Apostolic-Lutheran Movement in America (Ironwood, Mich.: National Publishing Co., 1947), p. 9.

[2] Kaaresuvanto is in Finnish Lapland, close to the border of Swedish Lapland and Norwegian Finmark. At present time there still are many Laestadian groups in northern Sweden and Norway, all of them belonging to the official Lutheran state churches. Mainly, however, it has been, and still is, a Finnish Lutheran movement.

[3] Saarnivaara, op. cit., p. 15.

The Laestadians settled in Michigan around 1870. In 1879 one of the first churches adopted the name: The Finnish Apostolic Lutheran Church of Calumet.[3] From that time Laestadians in the United States have been known mostly as the Apostolic Lutherans. It is almost a pure Finnish-American movement in this country, and its history has been one of disagreements and breaks. By 1897 there were three separate groups.[4] In 1928 a certain merger occurred with the organizing of The Apostolic

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[1] Ibid., p. 16.

[2] Ibid., p. 19.

[3] Ibid., pp. 20-22.

[4] The groups were called: The Old-Laestadians, Firstborn, and New Awakenists. The most important issues of disagreement were over the "third use of the Law" and the doctrine of the Church.

Lutheran Church, but as late as 1946 there were still five different groups among the Laestadians, totaling about 10,000 members.[1]

"The Evangelicals,"[2] have always stressed Private Confession and still use it. The official doctrine of confession says:

> "On confession we believe according to the Small Catechism that we should confess. . .to the confessor those sins which we know and feel in our hearts, and which burden our conscience. The confession of sins to a Christian brother (confessor) is a good gift of God and a privilege which every Christian should use according to his needs and the demands of his conscience. Confession should never be taught in an exacting spirit, as if it were a command; neither should it be taught as a condition of salvation, for the only condition of salvation is faith and trust in the Gospel. If a believer is burdened in his conscience with some sins and transgressions which he has done as an unbeliever (or as a believer), and which he has never confessed to anybody but God, and these sins are a hindrance to his faith, then his inner need and an urge to confess them to a Christian brother is the voice of the Holy Spirit, to which he should be obedient. Confession of sins to a confessor is no meritorious work, and the believer is not justified by that, for he is already righteous in Christ. He confesses his sins in order to restore peace of conscience through absolution and in order that he may be able to appropriate the Gospel, not thinking that only those sins are forgiven which he confesses, for the absolution means that all his sins are forgiven, even the sins which he does not know. In confession he should, however, be honest, so that he tells everything truthfully, and does not hide anything that bothers his conscience. . . ."[3]

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[1] The present groups are: The Apostolic Lutheran Church, The Heidemanians, The Firstborn, The New Awakenists, and The Evangelicals (which in 1940 separated into two groups). For details about differences, size etc., cf. Saarnivaara, op. cit., pp. 82-89.

[2] "The Evangelicals lay much less emphasis on confession and sanctification than other Laestadians do, placing almost all stress on the fully sufficient sacrifice of Christ and justification in His blood." Ibid., p. 87.

[3] Ibid., pp. 92f.

The Laestadians have never associated much with other Lutherans, and there are seemingly certain difficulties in establishing contact with them. However, one may assume that no Lutheran bodies at the present time use Private Confession as much as these do.[1]

With the exception of the Lutheran Churches with Norwegian and especially Laestadian background, little thought has been given to Private Confession in American Lutheran writing and discussion. The few examples referred to give no particular clues, except for the Laestadians. This group, however, represents a very small segment of American Lutheranism. Therefore, if current writing and discussion about Private Confession should be the only criterion, the conclusion inevitably would be that Private Confession was practiced to a certain extent in earlier American Lutheranism, but almost disappeared by the turn of the last century.

C. Confessional Bases and Struggle.

In the history of Private Confession in American Lutheranism, there is another aspect which is necessary to investigate, namely the confessional bases of the churches, i.e., to what extent the Lutheran confessional books have been, and are, regarded as normative. The strong confessional basis of Private Confession has been discussed above.[2] Consequently one has to expect that the more emphasis placed upon doctrines and confessional writings, the more seriously the recommendation of Private Confession is taken. Lutheran church bodies with a continuous stress on doctrines will, supposedly, never have completely neglected Private Confession. On the other hand, Lutheran church bodies with periods of negligent confessional attitude, will probably have paid less attention to the practice of Private Confession. The intention of the following discussion is not to make a detailed study of confessional disagreements, but rather to state the main confessional development from the time Lutheranism was brought to this country until the present time.

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[1] Cf. Appendix, IX.

[2] Part I, Chap. I.

1. Confessional Attitude in Early American Lutheranism.

Lutherans from several countries settled in the state of New Netherland during the first part of the sixteenth century.[1] The first Lutheran churches in this area were probably built in 1649.[2] Needing a Lutheran pastor, they sent a letter to Amsterdam, the same year, including a petition "for advice and assistance as to how they might obtain a pastor and the public exercise of religion according to the Augsburg Confession."[3] From the very beginning the Lutheran churches ran into difficulties concerning the confessional basis. Living in a Reformed colony, the authorities were not in favour of other forms of worship, and in 1656 an application was sent to the directors in New Amsterdam for permission to have free services. The letter begins: "We, the united members of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession. . . ."[1] Freedom for religious services was obtained in 1664 when the British conquered the state.[2] The two incidents mentioned above, indicate the strict Lutheran attitude toward their confessions. This is not surprising since the mother church in Holland took the same position.[3]

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[1] Harry J. Kreider, The Beginnings of Lutheranism in New York (New York, 1949), p. 7, says: "In Manhattan there were at least seven nationalities of Lutherans: German, Danish, Frisian, Norwegian, Dutch, Polish, and Swedish."

[2] First Lutheran Church in Albany and St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in New York City. Cf. Kreider, op. cit., p. 2.

[3] The letter quoted in Kreider, op. cit., pp. 16f.

The Swedes came to the Delaware River in 1638. Swedish pastors came from their home country for more than a hundred years, stayed in the colony of New Sweden for a time, and returning home again. The instruction in 1643 for the Swedes in America, outlined the confessional basis: "all proper care shall be taken that divine service be zealously performed according to the Unaltered Augsburg Confession. . . ."[4] The confessional freedom remained after the Dutch possession of the colony in 1655, and the British in 1674.[5]

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[1] Henry E. Jacobs, A History of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States (New York: Christian Literature Co., 1893), p. 52.

[2] Cf. New S.H., VII, 84.

[3] Jacobs, op. cit., p. 41, refers to church constitutions in Holland from 1597, 1614, 1644, and 1681, all telling the preachers to teach according to the symbolical books, the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, its Apology, the Smalcald Articles, and the Formula of Concord.

[4] Ibid., p. 82.

[5] Cf. New S.H., VII, 84.

German settlers arrived in Pennsylvania in 1683.[1] The oldest German Lutheran church was probably established in 1703.[2] Thousands of new emigrants came during the first half of the eighteenth century. They were scattered along the entire Atlantic coastline, a great number stayed in New York, but Pennsylvania was their first choice. Until the 1740's there was little organization. However, as early as 1735 there was synodical meeting of the New York and New Jersey churches.[3] A constitution was written, in which is stated that the confessional writings are "our Symbolical books, the Unaltered Confession of Augsburg, its Apology, the Smalcald Articles, both Catechisms of Luther, and the Formula of Concord."[4] The need for pastoral services made the German Lutherans accept Count Zinzendorf[5] in 1741. Zinzendorf wanted to be an "Evangelical Lutheran Inspector and Pastor of Pennsylvania,"[6] but much confusion arose because he also worked among Moravians, Baptists, and Reformed people.[7] The following year, however, Muehlenberg arrived.[1] He replaced Zinzendorf, and built up German congregations all over Pennsylvania. Having a pledge on his ordination certificate from 1739 to teach according to "Augustana, the Apology, the Catechism, the Smalcald Articles, and the Formula of Concord,"[2] he stressed the confessional structure of the Lutheran churches. The same was true of his first helper, Pastor Brunnholtz, who arrived in 1745 with a letter from Francke writing about Brunnholtz's steadfastness in the confessional view.[3] Muehlenberg did not write a constitution for the Synod of Pennsylvania which he organized in 1748,[4] but the confessional attitude must have been taken for granted. In the constitution for the Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of North America, founded in 1781, Muehlenberg set down the confessional pledge in clear words: "Every minister professes that he holds the Word of God and our symbolical books in doctrinal life."[5] Church history writers agree that "the ministers were pledged to the Augsburg Confession,"[6] and that "the doctrinal and confessional position of those fathers was unequivocally that of the historical standards of the Lutheran Church."[7]

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[1] A large Bibliography for German Lutheran history in America is given in New S.H., VII, 93.

[2] In New Hanover, Pa.

[3] Lars P. Qualben, The Lutheran Church in Colonial America (New York: Nelson and Sons, 1940), pp. 195f.

[4] Loc. cit.

[5] Nicolaus Ludwig Zinzendorf was born in Dresden, Germany, 1700, and died at Herrnhut in 1760. He is especially known as the founder of the Unity of Brethren. For a brief account of Zinzendorf, cf. W. Walker, Greatest Men of the Christian Church (Chicago, 1908).

[6] Quoted from Jacobs, op. cit., p. 203.

[7] Ibid., p. 208.

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[1] Cf. supra, p. 152f.

[2] Jacobs, op. cit., p. 212.

[3] Ibid., p. 219.

[4] Cf. New S.H., VII, 85.

[5] Jacobs, op. cit., p. 261.

[6] Abdel Ross Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism in America (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1955), p. 32.

[7] New S.H., VII, 86.

2. Confessional Laxity in the East.

> "In the first era of the Lutheran Church in America, from the imigration of the first Lutheran settlers to the organization of the General Synod, the type of Lutheranism which was to be found in the new world was that of the home countries, that of the Formula of Concord. Not only the Dutch and Swedish, but also the German Lutheran pastors had to declare their adherence to the doctrine of the Lutheran Church as laid down symbolically in the Book of Concord."[1]

The General Synod was organized in 1820, and the above words, written by George Fritschel in 1916, are not quite in harmony with facts. European Pietism had become strong from the last part of the eighteenth century, but so had Rationalism,[2] which entered American Lutheranism in the 1760's,[3] and gained a strong foothold immediately after Muehlenberg's death in 1787.[4] In addition to Pietism and Rationalism, there was a strong tendency towards unionization, i.e., co-operation with Reformed and other denominations. The Swedes in the Delaware district went to extremes. For many years they had had a fellowship with the Episcopalian Church.[5] After the ties with Sweden were broken in 1789, the congregations "had been absorbed by the Protestant Episcopal Church and thus had been lost entirely to the Lutheran fold."[1] The result was that all signs of Swedish Lutheranism disappeared after 1846.[2] The German Lutherans represented a larger number, and fared better. However, hymnbooks and pulpits were shared with other denominations, and their leanings are best expressed by stating that they omitted The Augsburg Confession, as well as other confessional books from the constitution of the newly organized synod of 1792, -The German Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium in Pennsylvania and the Adjacent States.[3] Muehlenberg's son-in-law, John C. Kunze, probably played an important part in the writing of this constitution.[4] Kunze led the New York Ministerium, founded in 1785, in which a resolution was passed in 1797 that Lutherans should not form congregations where other denominations had established parishes, because of "the intimate relationship subsisting between the English Episcopal and Lutheran churches, the identity of their doctrine and the near approach of their discipline."[5] Frederick Quitmann became leader after Kunze's death in 1807, and the following twenty years saw New York Ministerium disregarding Lutheran doctrines, Luther's catechism, and finally even the confessional pledge for the ministers:

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[1] George J. Fritschel, The Formula of Concord (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1916), p. 123.

[2] Cf. *supra*, p. 144.

[3] Abdel Ross Wentz, The Lutheran Church in American History (Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publication House, 1923), pp. 83-97.

[4] Jacobs, *op. cit.*, p. 310.

[5] Cf. F. Bente, American Lutheranism, I (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1919), 13f.

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[1] Paul W. Spaude, The Lutheran Church Under American Influence (Burlington, Iowa: Lutheran Literary Board, 1943), p. 307.

[2] Bente, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

[3] This was the new name for the Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of North America, founded 1781.

[4] Cf. Jacobs, *op. cit.*, p. 310.

[5] Spaude, *op. cit.*, p. 307, quoting the resolution.

> "And we establish it as a fundamental rule of this association that the person to be ordained shall not be required to make any other engagement than this, that he will faithfully teach, as well as perform all other ministerial duties and regulate his walk and conversation, according to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as contained in Holy Scriptures, and that he will observe this constitution while he remains a member of this Ministerium."[1]

The Pennsylvania Lutherans went in the same direction for a time. The pastors were ordained disregarding any special pledge to the confessional books.[2]

In 1817 a common hymnal for Lutheran and Reformed churches was published.[3] There also was a desire to establish a common seminary, and in 1818 a committee was appointed to start "The Theological Seminary for the Education of Pious Young Men to the Evangelical Ministry."[4] The confusion created by this development, spread over the entire Eastern United States.[5] There were Lutheran pastors and congregations who retained their confessional attitude, but as a whole, disintegration was more than a threat.[6] However, the General Synod was established,

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[1] A. L. Graebner, Geschichte der Lutherischen Kirche in Amerika (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1892), p. 655. The English translation is quoted in Spaude, *op. cit.*, pp. 366f.

[2] Spaude, *op. cit.*, p. 367.

[3] Das Gemeinschaftliche Gesangbuch.

[4] To a certain extent this disintegration might have been due to European influence. There was "union" between Lutheran and Reformed churches in several parts of Germany, especially in Prussia. For a short survey, cf. New S.H., VII, 79ff.

[5] New S.H., VII, 87.

"to unite more firmly the scattered members of the Lutheran Church on this continent."[1]

The General Synod was organized in 1820 by initiative of the synod of Pennsylvania. The idea was to create a body in which all synods, if possible, should be members. However, the history of the General Synod was one of "Internal Discord."[2] Only a few synods became members from the beginning.[3] The mother synod withdrew in 1823 only to return in 1853. Some synods joined during the 1830's,[4] but the General Synod did not represent the majority of Lutherans in America except for a few years in the 1860's. One of the reasons for the "discord" certainly was the confessional position:

On the one hand, there was a traditional attitude in favor of a confessional basis. A seminary for the General Synod was established in 1826, and the following principle put down: "In this Seminary the fundamental doctrines of the Holy Scripture as found in the Augsburg Confession, shall be taught in the German and English languages."[5] When professors were inducted into office they were required to affirm: "I believe that the Augsburg Confession and the Catechism of

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[1] New S. H., VII, 87.

[2] Abdel Ross Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism in America (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1955), p. 99.

[3] The synods of Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Maryland-Virginia.

[4] Hartwick Synod in 1831; South Carolina Synod 1835; New York Synod 1837.

[5] Quoted from J. L. Neve, A Brief History of the Lutheran Church in America (Burlington, Iowa, 1904), p. 67.

Luther are a summary and correct exhibition of the fundamental doctrines of God's Word."[1] Four years later the future pastors had to answer in the affirmative the following question: "Do you believe that the fundamental doctrines of the Word of God are taught in a manner substantially correct in the doctrinal articles of the Augsburg Confession?"[2]

On the other hand, there existed a confessional laxity. Nothing was mentioned of confessional writings in 1820 when the General Synod was organized.[3] In 1835 only a paragraph was added in the constitution that new members "should accept the fundamental doctrine of the Bible as taught by our Church."[4] This apparent return to a doctrinal basis, was undermined by an official statement in 1845 to the Evangelical Church in Germany: "The distinctive doctrines which separate the Lutheran and the Reformed Churches we do not consider essential. The tendency of the so-called old Lutheran party seems to us to be behind the time. . . ."[5]

However, as a whole, there must have been an increasing confessional awareness. Jacobs characterized the situation of 1853: "The confessional tendency seems to be breaking down all obstacles and sweeping everything before it."[6] This may have been an overstatement, but several new synods joined the General Synod during this period.[1] The Ministerium of Pennsylvania returned even though with some hesitation.

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[1] Ibid., p. 68.

[2] Ibid., p. 67.

[3] Cf. Abdel Ross Wentz, The Lutheran Church in American History (Phila.: United Lutheran Publ. House, 1923), p. 261.

[4] Quoted from Neve, op. cit., p. 65.

[5] Quoted from New S.H., VII, 87.

[6] Jacobs, op. cit., p. 421.

First there was a declaration:

> ". . .this synod regards the General Synod as an association of Evangelical Lutheran synods, entertaining the same views of the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, as these are expressed in the confessional writings of our Evangelical Lutheran Church, and especially in the Unaltered Augsburg Confession. . . ."[2]

Secondly there was a resolution:

> "That we also in common with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of our fathers, acknowledge the collective body of the symbolical books as the historical-confession writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and that we also. . .accord to the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism an especial importance among our symbolical books generally."[3]

Finally there was a reservation:

> ". . .should the General Synod at any time violate its constitution and require of our synod, or of any synod, . . .assent to anything conflicting with the old and long-established faith of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, then our delegates are hereby required to protest against such action, to withdraw from its sessions, and to report to this body."[4]

The left wing of the General Synod was not in favour of conservatism, but regarded it as a danger.[5] The first professor at Gettysburg Seminary, S. S. Schmucker, was the leader. He wanted to have a special type of Lutheranism, later known as "American Lutheranism." "American Lutheranism" has been defined as "a Lutheranism that had been greatly modified by American Puritanism and American Methodism,"[1] characterized as a "new edition of Zwinglianism, which in a dishonest fashion, appropriates the Lutheran name,"[2] and said to have the purpose to "infuse into it the vigor of Presbyterianism and the warmth of Methodism."[3] Schmucker presented his ideas for the first time in 1840.[4] "He maintained that the Lutheran Church, since the time of its Reformation, has now outlived its strict confessionalism."[5] He outlined the future for the Lutheran Church without strict doctrines, and much in harmony with his "Platform" fifteen years later. Without receiving a good response, Schmucker and a friend, Dr. B. Kurtz, asked the General Synod in 1845 to give a "clear and concise view of the doctrines and practices of the American Lutheran Church."[6]

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[1] Cf. New S.H., VII, 87f. Twenty-three district synods were members in 1855.

[2] Quoted from Jacobs, op. cit., p. 421.

[3] Ibid., p. 422.

[4] Quoted from New S.H., VII, 87.

[5] A very good, documentary discussion of the struggle of American Lutheranism over the "Definite Synodical Platform" is presented by Paul Spaude, op. cit., pp. 274-288.

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[1] L. P. Qualben, A History of the Christian Church (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1933), p. 478, quoting Spaude, op. cit., p. 276.

[2] Lehre und Wehre (1873), p. 29, quoting Spaude, op. cit., p. 276.

[3] Abdel Ross Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism in America (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1955), p. 137.

[4] S. S. Schmucker, Portraiture of Lutheranism. Cf. Spaude, op. cit., p. 278.

[5] Spaude, op. cit., p. 279.

[6] Proceedings of the Thirteenth Convention of the General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States (1854), p. 54, quoting Spaude, op. cit., pp. 280f.

The report, presented five years later and containing Schmucker's views, was not accepted. In 1852 Schmucker repeated his opinion in a new book,[1] and again he was not heard.

Then, in 1855, a brochure, Definite Synodical Platform, was published.[2] It was anonymous, but undoubtedly Schmucker was the author.[3] The statements in the "Platform" claimed to be in accordance with the basis of the General Synod. Three proposals were presented in the "Platform." The first and second ones stated that the Bible, the Apostles' Creed and the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed should be norms for Christian teaching. The third one suggested adoption of the "American Recension of the Augsburg Confession of 1530."[4] Thus, a revised form of the Augsburg Confession was to become the only acknowledged confessional writing. Most articles in the Augsburg Confession were to be retained, but five grave "Romish errors"[5] had to be rejected:

> "The Approval of the Ceremonies of the Mass;
> Private Confession and Absolution;
> The Denial of the Divine Institution and Obligation
>   of the Christian Sabbath;
> Baptismal Regeneration;
> The Real Presence of the Body and Blood of Christ
>   in the Eucharist."[6]

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[1] S. S. Schmucker, The American Lutheran Church (Philadelphia: Miller, 1852), especially pp. 233-246.

[2] Definite Platform, Doctrinal and Disciplinarian, for Evangelical Lutheran District Synods; Constructed in Accordance with the Principles of the General Synod (1855).

[3] Cf. supra, p. 154 note 4.

[4] Spaude, op.cit., p. 282.

[5] Definite Platform, pp. 4f.

[6] Loc. cit.

On this basis, the "American Recension of the Augsburg Confession of 1530" changed twelve of the twenty-one doctrinal articles in the Augsburg Confession, and omitted the seven last articles on abuses.

3. Return to Confessionalism.

American Lutheranism as expressed in the Definite Synodical Platform, was opposed more than anyone could have expected.[1] Except for three smaller synods in Ohio,[2] twenty synods were against the "Platform." Books were written against "American Lutheranism."[3] A declaration was written in Pittsburg the following year, later becoming the basis for an official declaration by the General Synod: "while the basis of our General Synod has allowed diversity in regard to some parts of the Augsburg Confession, that basis never was designed to imply the right to alter, amend, or curtail the confession itself."[4] The Franckean Synod[5] applied for membership in 1857 in spite of the "un-Lutheran" basis of this synod.[6] The General Synod made a reservation for accepting the Franckean Synod,[1] but the acceptance of the Melanchton Synod[2] two years later, makes the reservation somewhat doubtful. The Melanchton Synod strongly favoured the "Platform," and had similar views in its "Declaration of Faith."[3] The General Synod had as members two-thirds of all Lutherans in America in 1860,[4] but the uncertainty in the confessional basis made one member after the other break away. The Swedes and Norwegians left in 1860,[5] the Southern churches in 1863.[6] At the convention of the General Synod in 1864, the Franckean Synod was accepted as a member with a vote of ninety-seven to forty. In protest, the Pennsylvania delegation together with several other representatives withdrew. A resolution was passed by the General Synod that synods applying for membership "had to receive and hold the Augsburg Confession as a correct exhibition of. . .the Word of God."[7] However, the unity could not be kept. The southern synods did not rejoin after the Civil War, but remained independent on the following basis: "Let us, then, at this particular junction of our church, plant ourselves firmly upon the Augsburg Confession."[1] Even more serious was the secession of the Ministerium of Pennsylvania. A new theological seminary was established in Philadelphia, and following a meeting in Reading, Pennsylvania,[2] the General Council was organized in 1867. Thus, from 1867, there were three larger, independent synods where there formerly had been one: The General Synod, The General Synod in the South, and The General Council.

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[1] Abdel Ross Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism in America (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1955), pp. 142f. Cf. Jacobs, op. cit., p. 426.

[2] Wentz, op. cit., pp. 142f. Cf. Spaude, op. cit., p. 283. The names of the three synods: The East Ohio Synod, the Wittenberg Synod, and the Olive Branch Synod.

[3] Among others: Dr. W. Mann, A Plea for the Augsburg Confession; R. Hoffman, The Broken Platform; J. A. Brown, The New Theology. Cf. Jacobs, op. cit., p. 427.

[4] Jacobs, op. cit., p. 427.

[5] The Franckean Synod was in New York, established in 1837.

[6] In its declaration, the Lutheran confessional books had no place.

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[1] The reservation said, e.g., "with the understanding that said synod. . .declare in an official manner its adoption of the doctrinal articles of the Augsburg Confession as a substantially correct exhibition of the fundamental doctrines of the Word of God." Cf. Jacobs, op. cit., p. 456.

[2] The Melanchton Synod in Maryland was organized in 1857, but lasted only for eleven years. It was lead by Dr. Kurtze.

[3] Cf. Jacobs, op. cit., p. 433.

[4] Ibid., p. 434.

[5] The Augustana Synod was organized in May, 1860.

[6] The General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Confederate States of America. The Civil War was the main cause for the break.

[7] Edmund J. Wolf, The Lutherans in America (New York: Hill and Co., 1889), p. 366.

The old General Synod, which lost more than half its members, had a slow, but continual confessional growth in the last years of the nineteenth century. It was expressed in a resolution of 1895:

> "The convention of the General Synod expresses its entire satisfaction with the present form of doctrinal basis and confessional subscription, which is the Word of God, as the infallible rule of faith and practice, and the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as throughout in perfect consistence with it -- nothing more, nothing less."[3]

In 1901 another statement was passed:

> "We hold that to make any distinction between fundamental and so-called nonfundamental doctrines in the Augsburg Confession is contrary to the basis of the General Synod as set forth in our formula of confessional subscription."[4]

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[1] Jacobs, op. cit., p. 454.

[2] The following synods were represented: Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio, Pittsburg, Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Canada, the Norwegian, the Swedish. Cf. New S.H., VII, 88.

[3] Quoted from Abdel Ross Wentz, The Lutheran Church in American History (Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publication House, 1923), p. 278.

[4] Ibid., pp. 278f.

In the Doctrinal Restatement of 1913 the latter view is repeated:

> "The General Synod holds. . .the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as a correct exhibition of the faith and doctrine of our Church as founded upon that Word. . . . [The other confessions in the Book of Concord are] . . .expositions of Lutheran doctrine of great historical and interpretive value."[1]

The General Synod of the South based itself on the Augsburg Confession from the organization year 1863. However, a difference of interpretation of several articles was allowed.[2] The revised constitution of 1868 did not mention such permission,[3] and in 1872 any reservation was clearly out: "It has placed itself unequivocally upon the Ecumenical Creeds and the Augsburg Confession in its true, native and original sense."[4] As for the other writings in the Book of Concord, the synod expressed its attitude in 1880: "The General Synod in the South acknowledges the symbols adopted subsequently to the Augsburg Confession as in accord with and an unfolding of the teachings of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession."[5] The United Synod of the South was organized in 1886, and was composed of the former General Synod of the South and other bodies.[6]

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[1] Ibid., p. 280. Cf. Fritschel, op. cit., p. 124.

[2] Abdel Ross Wentz, The Lutheran Church in American History (Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publication House, 1923), p. 289.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] It included the synods of: North Carolina, Tennessee, South Carolina, Virginia, Southwest Virginia, Mississippi, Georgia, and Holston.

This new synod had the same attitude toward the Book of Concord, and left no room for any misunderstanding about the other confessional books as being ". . .true and Scriptural developments of the doctrines taught in the Augsburg Confession, and in perfect harmony of one and the same pure Scriptural faith."[1]

The General Council remained nearly unchanged during its fifty years.[2] The confessional basis was strictly laid down from the beginning in the principles it accepted in 1866 and 1867:

> "V. The unity of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, as a portion of the Holy Christian Church, depends upon her abiding in one and the same faith. . . .
> VI. The Unaltered Augsburg Confession is by pre-eminence the confession of that faith. The acceptance of its doctrines and the avowal of them without equivocation or mental reservation make, mark, and identify that church. . . .
> VIII. We accept and acknowledge the doctrine of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession in its original sense . . . . We accept its statement of truth as in perfect accordance with the canonical Scriptures. . . .
> IX. In thus formally accepting and acknowledging the Unaltered Augsburg Confession we declare our conviction that the other confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, inasmuch as they set forth none other than its system of doctrine and articles of faith, are of necessity pure and Scriptural. Pre-eminent. . . are these: the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Catechisms of Luther, and the Formula of Concord; all of which are, with the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, in the perfect harmony of one and the same Scriptural faith."[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 289. Cf. Neve, op. cit., p. 81.

[2] Abdel Ross Wentz, The Lutheran Church in American History (Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publication House, 1923), p. 281ff.

[3] Quoted from Jacobs, op. cit., p. 473. The whole body of principles are found pp. 472-475.

In looking for reasons concerning the common return to confessionalism, Spaude points out that the widespread movement of Revivalism had a conservative effect in the Lutheran churches.[1] Wentz summarizes the development as having three causes: Earlier religious movements in America, renewed interest in history and doctrine, and rigid confessionalists from Germany and Scandinavia.[2] His conclusion of the confessional struggle, is: "It is interesting to observe, therefore, that the progress of every Lutheran body in this country has been marked by an increasing appreciation of the confessions of the church."[3]

4. Stable Conservatism in the Midwest.

The statement by Wentz referred to above probably is applied mainly to Lutheranism in the East. In another book, Wentz says about those Lutheran synods having their center in the Midwest: "Among the Lutherans of Missouri, Ohio, Iowa, and the Norwegians, super-confessional ground was taken from the beginning and kept."[4]

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[1] Spaude, op. cit., pp. 378-395.

[2] Abdel Ross Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism in America (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1955), p. 106. Jacobs, op. cit., pp. 354ff., refers that 4,731,023 Germans came to the United States between 1820 and 1892, and 500,000 Scandinavians between 1881 and 1890.

[3] Abdel Ross Wentz, A Basic History etc. . ., p. 246.

[4] Abdel Ross Wentz, The Lutheran Church in American History (Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publication House, 1923), p. 290.

The Joint Synod of Ohio dates back to 1818.[1] Its doctrinal position was expressed officially in 1836: "This Synod strictly adheres to the Augsburg Confession."[2] In 1847 all symbolical books were adopted as the basis for its confession.[3] The Iowa Synod was organized in 1854. It had a strict confessional attitude, based on all confessional books in the Book of Concord.[4] However, a distinction was made between what is essential, i.e., a direct doctrine of faith, and what is non-essential, i.e., "what those standards contain in the exegetical, historical, and explanatory material."[5] The Missouri Synod, organized in 1847, left no room for such a distinction, and conflicted with the Iowa Synod. The Missouri Synod's basis was the Book of Concord without any reservations. The conference between Missouri and Iowa in 1867 showed the difference.[6] There was no disagreement concerning the confessional statements about faith. But Iowa held that difference of opinion might be permitted in other cases.[7] The Norwegians expressed their confessional basis in the Old Constitution of 1846: "our church body shall forever continue to be, just as it now is, in conformity to the genuine Lutheran faith and doctrine, and built on God's Word in the Holy Scriptures in conjunction with the Apostolic and Augsburg Articles of Faith. . . ."[1] In the constitution of 1853, Luther's Small Catechism was mentioned in addition to the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.[2] "The Norwegian Synod (following the historical development of Norway) specifies only the Augsburg Confession; but, in fact, it stands upon the Book of Concord and obligates all professors of theology to teach in accordance with it. The United Norwegian Synod has the same position."[3] All Norwegian synods had a similar confessional position which also gave a basis for merger in 1890[4] and 1917.[5]

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[1] The name "Joint Synod of Ohio" is from 1833.

[2] Abdel Ross Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism in America (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1955), p. 135.

[3] Cf. New S.H., VII, 90.

[4] Neve, op. cit., p. 147.

[5] New S.H., VII, 90. Cf. Neve, op. cit., p. 147.

[6] Cf. New S.H., VII, 90.

[7] Ibid.

What is quoted above concerning the "super-confessional ground" for the Lutherans of Missouri, Ohio, Iowa, and the Norwegians,[6] goes also for other Lutherans in the Midwest: the Buffalo Synod, the Joint Synod of Wisconsin, the Minnesota Synod, and the Michigan Synod. The Buffalo Synod[7] was organized in 1845. It was known to have "high-church" ideals which ~~caused certain~~

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[1] Nelson-Fevold, op. cit., p. 337.

[2] Ibid., p. 344. In 1890 the same was stated in the constitution for The United Norwegian Lutheran Church in America; cf. Nelson, op. cit., p. 333.

[3] Fritschel, op. cit., pp. 123f.

[4] In 1870 there were eight different Norwegian church bodies. The United Norwegian Church of America was established in 1890 by a merger of the Norwegian Augustana Synod (org. 1860), the Danish-Norwegian Conference (org. 1870), and the Anti-Missourian Brotherhood (org. 1887).

[5] Cf. supra, pp. 161f.

[6] Cf. supra, p. 184.

[7] Originally called "Synod of Lutherans Immigrated from Prussia."

caused certain controversies with the Missouri Synod.[1] The synods of Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan joined the newly established Synodical Conference in 1872 together with the Synods of Missouri, Illinois, and Ohio. The Synodical Conference is based strictly on the entire Book of Concord: "The Synodical Conference accepts the canonical Scripture of the Old and the New Testament as the Word of God and also the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, constituting the Book of Concord of 1580."[2]

Our discussion so far has shown that the nineteenth century was one of confessional struggle. The controversy in the East was, by far, the most serious. The matter of conflict was the very confessional basis for the Lutheran churches. In the Midwest the struggle was more over the understanding of confessional details. The confessional basis as such was never questioned. By the turn of the century, the Lutheran churches were all established on a traditional Lutheran confessional basis. The common concern forced "able and eminent writers" from different groups to make statements about the doctrinal position in a published book of 1893.[3] Unanimously the

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[1] The controversy was especially about the doctrines of the ministry, the Church, the office of the keys, and church and state. Cf. Abdel Ross Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism in America (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1955), pp. 145-174.

[2] Doctrinal Declarations (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1957), p. 3.

[3] The Distinctive Doctrines and Usages of the General Bodies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publishing Society, 1893).

Augsburg Confession is stressed as being authoritative, and for several of the bodies, the entire Book of Concord is considered confessional.

5. Contemporary Confessionalism.

At the present time (1961) about 99.6 percent of all Lutherans in the United States belong to either The Synodical Conference of the National Lutheran Council.[1] The confessional bases are as follows:

(a) The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America consists of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Church, The Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (Slovak), and The Evangelical Lutheran Synod (Norwegian).[2] The confessional basis for The Synodical Conference was quoted above,[3] and the different bodies are underlining the doctrinal conservatism in their own constitutional statements.

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[1] According to the official figures, compiled by the National Lutheran Council in 1961, there are 8,054,417 baptized members in the Lutheran churches in the United States. Bodies affiliated with National Lutheran Council count for about 5,500,000; bodies affiliated with the Synodical Conference count for about 2,800,000. The four other bodies (The National Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Finnish Apostolic Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Brethren, and the Eielsen's Synod) have only 26,483 members (The National Evangelical Lutheran Church is affiliated with the Synodical Conference.). The figures are published in most Lutheran yearbooks. See for example: 1961 Yearbook. The United Lutheran Church in America (Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publication House, 1961), p. 202.

[2] The Missouri Synod is the largest body, having about 2,400,000 members. The Wisconsin Synod has about 375,000, and the two last ones less than 20,000 each.

[3] Cf. supra, p. 187.

The Missouri Synod writes in Article Two, "Confession":

> "Synod, and every member of Synod, accepts without reservation: 1. The Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament. . . . 2. All the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God, to wit, the three Ecumenical Creeds, the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Large Catechism of Luther, the Small Catechism of Luther, and the Formula of Concord."[1]

The Wisconsin Synod says in the article about the confessional basis:

> "This Synod also adheres to the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church embodied in the Book of Concord of 1580, not insofar as, but because they are a correct presentation and exposition of the pure doctrine of the Word of God."[2]

The Slovak and the Norwegian Synod regard the Book of Concord as a "true" presentation of the Word of God, and subscribe to it.[3] The affiliated National Evangelical Lutheran Church (Finnish) accepts the Book of Concord as a "correct presentation."[4]

(b) The National Lutheran Council was organized in 1918. In the constitution adopted in 1945, is written in the preamble:

> "n. Whereas, In their respective constitutions, the Participating Bodies accept the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism as the true exposition and presentation of the doctrine of the Holy Scripture: . . . ."[5]

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[1] Doctrinal Declarations, op. cit., p. 3, quoting "Article II, Confession," from the Missouri Synod's constitution.

[2] Ibid., quoting "Article II, Confession," from the Wisconsin Synod's constitution.

[3] Ibid., p. 4.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., p. 6, quoting the confessional paragraphs in Preamble of the National Lutheran Council.

Members of the National Lutheran Council are; The American Lutheran Church, Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church, American Evangelical Lutheran Church, Suomi Synod (Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church), The United Lutheran Church in American, and The Lutheran Free Church.[1]

The American Lutheran Church is a 1961 merger of three bodies, the former American Lutheran Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church.[2] The first of these three bodies was organized in 1930 by a merger of the Joint Synod of Ohio, the Iowa Synod, and the Buffalo Synod. In the 1930 constitution was stated:

> "The Church also accepts each and all of the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as the true exposition and presentation of the faith once for all delivered unto the saints, to wit: the three Ecumenical Creeds,. . . the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and its Apology; the Smalcald Articles; the Large and Small Catechisms of Luther; and the Formula of Concord."[3]

The second of the three bodies was established in 1917 under the name of the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, since 1947 known as the Evangelical Lutheran Church. The 1917 organization was a merger of the United Norwegian Church of

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[1] The American Lutheran Church has about 2,250,000 members; Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church 600,000; American Evangelical 24,000; Suomi Synod 36,000; The United Lutheran Church 2,500,000; and the Lutheran Free Church 84,000.

[2] In 1960 both the former American Lutheran Church (of German background) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church (of Norwegian background) had a little over 1,000,000 members. The third body, the United Evangelical Lutheran Church (of Danish background) had about 70,000 members.

[3] Doctrinal Declarations, op. cit., p. 5, quoting "Article II, Confession of Faith, Section 2," of the constitution.

America, Hauge's Synod, and The Norwegian Synod. In the constitution was stated:

> "As a brief and true statement of the doctrine of the Word of God, this Church accepts and confesses the symbolical books or confessional writings. . . . b) The Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Catechism."[1]

In comparing the two constitutions, we find that the one regards the Book of Concord as confessional, the other only part of it. In the constitution for the merger of 1961, this was solved the following way:

> "Section 2. As brief and true statements of the doctrines of the Word of God, the Church accepts and confesses the following Symbols, subscription to which shall be required of all its members, both congregations and individuals: (1) The ancient ecumenical Creeds . . . . (2) The Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism. Section 3. As further elaboration of and in accord with these Lutheran Symbols, the Church also receives the other documents in the Book of Concord of 1580. . ., and recognizes them as normative for its theology."[2]

The United Lutheran Church in America is the 1918-merger of the three large bodies in the East: The General Synod, The United Synod in the South, and The General Council. Due to the confessional development, a common basis was found:

> "Section 3. The United Lutheran Church in America receives and holds the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as a correct exhibition of faith and doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, founded upon the Word of God, and acknowledges all churches that sincerely hold and faithfully confess the doctrines of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession to be entitled to the name of Evangelical Lutheran.

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[1] Nelson, op.cit., p. 359, quoting "Chapter I, Name, Creed and Church Rites, 3," of the constitution.

[2] Doctrinal Declarations, op. cit., p. 7, quoted from the constitution proposed for the new American Lutheran Church, Article IV, "Confession."

> "Section 4. The United Lutheran Church in America recognizes the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, the *Smalcald Articles*, the *Large and Small Catechisms of Luther*, and the *Formula of Concord* as in the harmony of one and the same pure Scriptural faith."[1]

The Augustana Synod (of Swedish background) has retained its confessional basis from the day it left the General Synod,[2] until the present time. In 1930 the Augustana Synod became a member of the American Lutheran Conference,[3] and shared its confessional basis:

> "These synods also, without reservation, accept the symbolical books of the evangelical Lutheran Church, not insofar as, but because they are the presentation and explanation of the pure doctrine of the Word of God and a summary of the faith of the Lutheran Church. . . ."[4]

The American Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Suomi Synod, and the Lutheran Free Church have similar positions.[5]

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[1] *Doctrinal Declarations, op. cit.*, p. 5, quoted from "Article II, Doctrinal Basis" in the constitution.

[2] Cf. *supra*, p. 180.

[3] The Lutheran Conference was a Midwest organization of five members of the National Lutheran Council: the American Lutheran Church, the Augustana Synod, the Lutheran Free Church, the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, and the United Danish Lutheran Church. For details cf. Nelson, *op. cit.*, pp. 305ff, and *New S.H.*, XIV, 684.

[4] *Doctrinal Declarations, op. cit.*, p. 107, quoted from "The Minneapolis Thesis," Part II: "The Lutheran Symbols."

[5] The American Evangelical Lutheran Church was organized in 1872 by Danes. The United Evangelical Lutheran Church (which merged into the American Lutheran Church in 1961), withdrew from The A.E.L.C. in 1894. The Suomi Synod was organized in 1890. The Lutheran Free Church (of Norwegian background) was organized in 1897. The Lutheran Free Church was expected to merge with the American Lutheran Church in 1961, but still is hesitant. The remaining four bodies in the National Lutheran Council; The United Lutheran Church, the Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Suomi Synod, and the American Evangelical Lutheran Church, are expected to merge sometime during the 1960's.

Contemporary confessionalism is strong among the Lutheran churches in America. There are still divergencies of opinion and interpretation,[1] and one may speak of two types of Lutheran Confessionalism.[2] Nevertheless, there is "confessionalism" throughout America. All Lutheran churches in the United States are based, without exceptions, on the whole or parts of the Book of Concord.

Conclusion.

Since the Lutheran churches in the United States have their background in Europe, one must assume that the practice of Private Confession followed the European pattern as long as the "foreign" influence was strong. Granted that the assumption is valid, the practice of Private Confession has been decreasing. This conclusion seems to be confirmed by the fact that Private Confession has very rarely been an issue in American Lutheran thought and discussion.

On the other hand, the large group of Lutherans, originally located in the Midwest, has always retained a strict doctrinal position. Considering the attention and importance given to Private Confession in the Lutheran confessional books, one may assume that these Lutherans never entirely neglected the practice and teaching of Private Confession. Unsuccessful attempts were made to change the doctrinal basis of Lutherans in the East. As a reaction, there has been a common return to confessionalism. Involved in any confessionalism is a serious study and a deep concern for the confessional writings. Once more referring to the place of Private Confession in all parts of the Book of Concord, it is inevitable that Lutheranism in our century has paid attention to Private Confession.

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[1] Cf. Doctrinal Declarations, op. cit., pp. 9-110; and Nelson, op. cit., pp. 281-331.

[2] The one is influenced by European Erlangen-theology, and dominant in The United Lutheran Church, The American Evangelical Lutheran Church, The Augustana, and The Suomi Synods. The emphasis in this theology is: fidelity to the Lutheran confessions historically understood, exposition of the Bible (Heilsgeschichte), and justification of faith as the leading principle in theology. The other is called "Repristination Theology," emphasizing the verbal inspiration of the Bible and legalistic use of the confession. This view is dominant within the Synodical Conference, and strong within the new American Lutheran Church. Cf. Nelson, op. cit., pp. 283, note 2, and p. 323.

The final conclusion of our discussion to this point is therefore: Private Confession was practiced much more in early American than in contemporary Lutheranism. However, Private Confession has never been completely forgotten, and a limited practice of it has remained in several Lutheran church bodies. The present stress on confessionalism most likely accounts for contemporary interest in Private Confession.

CHAPTER V

AN EXAMINATION OF AMERICAN LUTHERAN HANDBOOKS AND WORSHIP MATERIALS

The practice of Private Confession is dependent on the extent to which Private Confession is known by the parish pastor and his congregation. If information about knowledge of Private Confession is lacking, certainly it cannot be practiced. Conversely, if information and knowledge are common, practice of Private Confession can be expected.

It is possible to inquire about this awareness both in the past and in the present. Every Lutheran pastor in this country had his service book or agenda, which usually included a section on occasional services. By studying his service books, indications will be gained as to whether or not Private Confession was known to the pastor. Furthermore, we can get strong indications by studying the editions of Luther's Small Catechism used by the pastor in his teaching ministry. If the section on confession appeared in the catechism, the whole congregation memorized it. Finally the hymnbooks used in the parishes give us additional information as to the extent Private Confession was known.

The presentation in this chapter does not claim to build on all service books, catechisms, and hymnbooks used among Lutherans in the United States. However, a large selection of books published in America has been consulted, and it may be assumed this has been ad adequate sampling for the conclusive remarks.[1]

The Lutheran churches in America are, at the present time, organized into two larger groups, the National Lutheran Council and the Synodical Conference.[2] Since 1958, all bodies in the National Lutheran Council have the same service book and hymnbook. A different set of books is used by the churches of the Synodical Conference. It seems convenient to keep this distinction in the following survey: firstly are discussed some agenda and service books of the larger bodies in the National Lutheran Council; secondly agenda and service books of churches in the Synodical Conference. The same distinction will be made in the survey of *Luther's Small Catechism*.and of hymnbooks.

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[1] The author has found the material for the present investigation mainly in Speer Library, Princeton, and the Library and Institute at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis.

[2] There are three Lutheran bodies affiliated neither with the National Lutheran Council, nor with the Synodical Conference. Since, however, they represent less than .3% of Lutherans in the United States, their hymnbooks, service books, and editions of Luther's catechisms are not discussed.

A. Service Books and Agenda.[1]

Luther published The German Mass and Order of Divine Public Service in 1526.[2] In the following years he rewrote the Book of Baptism,[3] Book of Marriage,[4] and A Formula for Ordaining.[5] However, he did not regard his editions to be obligatory. In the German Mass he set down the principle:

> "This and all other forms are so to be used that where they give rise to a misuse they should be forthwith set aside, and a new form be made ready; since outward forms are intended to serve to the advancement of faith and love, and not to be detriment of faith. . . all forms have their life, worth, strength, and virtues in proper use; or else they are of no avail and value whatever."[6]

This principle was taken literally by the Lutheran churches in Europe. A series of agenda and church ordinances was written during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[1] There was variety in form and content.[2] The early eighteenth century showed a marked decline, frequently leaving it to the individual pastor to use whatever book of worship and church services he found convenient.[3] In some agenda, Private Confession was given a place, in others it was omitted.[4]

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[1] Agenda --"things to be done"-- is a name used on official books of forms and ceremonies concerning divine services. Agenda was often a part of the Church Order, especially in the earlier periods after the Reformation. Other names meaning about the same as Agenda, were Manuale, Benedictionale, Rituale, and Obsequiale. Cf. New S.H., I,84. The term Agenda is maintained by the Synodical Conference, while Service Book and Liturgical Texts are used by the National Lutheran Council constituents.

[2] W 19 -- SL 10. Translated to English in Works of Martin Luther, op. cit., VI.

[3] W 19 -- SL 10.

[4] W 30, III -- SL 10.

[5] W 38 -- SL 10.

[6] W 19, pp. 72f.

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[1] Some of them were: Agenda of Prussia, 1525; Brunswick, 1528; Hamburg, 1529; Lübeck, 1531; Pomerania, 1535; Württemberg, 1536; Denmark, 1537; Saxony, 1539; Brandenburg, 1540; Halle, 1540; Mecklenburg, 1540 and 1552; Pfalzneuburg, 1543; Schleswick-Holstein, 1542; Schwäbisch-Hall, 1543; Hildesheim, 1544; Palatinate, 1544; Baden, 1556; Wittenberg, 1559 and 1565; Austria, 1671; Frankfurt, 1565; Holstein, 1614; Saxony, 1624; Koburg, 1626; Braunschweig-Lüneburg, 1615; Mecklenburg, 1650; Saxony and Westphalia, 1651; Brunswick-Lüneburg, 1657; Hesse, 1657; Halle, 1660; Weimar, 1664. Cf. New S.H., I, 84; Kirchenbuch (Leipzig, 1771); Lochner, op. cit., pp. 137ff.; J. L. Funk, Historische Beleuchtung der Agenden (Neustadt, 1827).

[2] An American Church historian divides the agenda in three classes: (1) those following closely the Lutheran model; (2) those in which the ideas of the Swiss Reformation were predominant; (3) those which retained appreciable elements of the Roman ritual. Albert Henry Newman, "Agenda," New S.H., I, 84ff.

[3] Cf. Ibid., p. 85. In the last half of the century a common agenda was adopted for most parts of Germany. Cf. ibid.

[4] In Kirchenbuch (Leipzig, 1771), Part II, pp. 472ff., can be read that the extensive ritual for Private Confession refers to agenda (Church Orders) from Brandenburg, 1540; Mecklenburg, 1552; Wittenberg, 1559 and 1565; Frankfurt, 1565; Holstein, 1614; Saxony, 1624. Cf. supra, p.134. Friedrich Lochner, Liturgische Formulare (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1895), pp. 137ff., refers to an agenda of 1536 where the pastor is told to hear confession, and comfort with absolution on Saturdays. Sammlung liturgischer Formulare der Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche (Nördlingen, 1839), pp. 25-37, is built on the agenda of Braunschweig-Lüneburg, 1615, concerning the detailed section of Private Confession. Kirchen-Ordnung (Weimar, 1664), pp. 362-368, stressed how the parishioners "sollen von Nutz der Privat-Absolution fleissig unterrichtet werden." Cf. also W. Loehe, Agende (Nördlingen, 1884), Part II, pp. 53f., 57f., 89.

1. The National Lutheran Council Constituents.

(a) For conducting services and ministerial acts in the first Lutheran congregations in America, the pastors used the agenda from their home country. This was done by the Swedes as well as the Germans.[1] Similarly in 1649, the Dutch parish in New York followed the homeland's ritual for the various services.[2] From the constitution of the first Lutheran Synod in America, printed in 1686,[3] the practice of Private Confession was similar to the one used in Holland and in most of Europe at this time: Everyone had to announce to the pastor in advance that they intended to participate in the Lord's Supper.[4] However, only

> "the young people. . .and likewise such as have burdens of conscience should be earnestly admonished that they should come to the preacher during the week to be examined in the Catechism. . .and to be instructed in, and comforted from, the Word of God; and private absolution shall not be denied them who desire it."[5]

Except for these few congregations, a large variety of service books were used. Therefore Wentz concludes that "little is known [about books being used] until the first common liturgy was adopted in 1748."[1]

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[1] Abdel Ross Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism in America (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1955), pp. 24ff.

[2] Harry J. Kreider, The Beginnings of Lutheranism in New York (New York, 1949), pp. 51-60, describes the first Communion service in 1669. It follows the Dutch Church Book, as do the six other forms of service, cf. note 121, p. 74. Public Confession was used before the first Communion service in 1669.

[3] The constitution for this synod of Lutherans in New York and New Jersey is quoted in Lars P. Qualben, The Lutheran Church in Colonial America (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1940), pp. 272-275.

[4] "The Constitution of the First Lutheran Synod in America," Chap. IV, Article I, quoted from Qualben, op. cit., p. 275.

[5] Ibid., Art. II.

(b) The liturgy of 1748 was the work of Muehlenberg who wanted a service book for the Germans in Pennsylvania. It was based on several European agenda.[2] The liturgy was never printed, but pastors made their own copies, some of which still exist.[3] Chapter IV is concerned with "Confession and the Holy Communion." The pastor is to record the names of those wishing to participate in the Lord's Supper.[4] However, nothing is said about Private Confession.[5] Everyone participated in a Public Confession, in which the pastor asked if they repented, if they admitted that they were sinners, and if they wanted to be absolved. To each of the questions the congregation must answer yes, whereupon the individual parishioners were absolved by the pastor.[6] The published German edition of 1786 and the

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[1] Wentz, op. cit., p. 29

[2] Calenberg, 1569; Lüneburg, 1643; Brandenburg-Magdeburg, 1739; Saxony, 1712; and the Lutheran London Constitution of 1694. Cf. Wentz, op. cit., p. 32; and New S.H., I, 86.

[3] Based on these copies, Jacobs, op. cit., pp. 269-275, and Qualben, op. cit., pp. 290-296 quotes "The Liturgy of 1748."

[4] "The Liturgy of 1748," Chap. IV, 2, quoted by Qualben, op. cit., p. 293.

[5] Jacobs, op. cit., p. 277, says this does not mean that Private Confession was not practiced, "not even members of their own congregation received the Lord's Supper without a personal conference with the pastor," cf. supra, p. 153.

[6] "The Liturgy of 1748," Chap. IV, 5, quoted by Qualben, op. cit., pp. 293f.

English translation of it in 1795[1] make no important changes in the rules concerning preparation for Holy Communion, neither in questions nor answers included in the Public Confession. The English translation was used mainly in New York, which had a period of strong rationalism[2] in the first half of the nineteenth century under the leadership of Dr. Quitmann. A new agenda and hymnbook was edited, but only small changes can be found concerning confession and absolution. In five succeeding editions,[3] the parishioners are absolved by the pastor by answering affirmatively to his questions concerning repentance and promise for a better life, and making common confession. However, there is a change in that the pastor continues after having declared absolution: "if we are impenitent. . .all our confessions and promises will be unavailing."[4]

The new agenda of 1818, published by the Pennsylvania Ministerium,[5] is characterized by a "complete falling away not only from the historical, conservative order of service, but also from positive Lutheran doctrine, in the orders for baptism, communion, and ordination."[1] However, no changes are made in the preparation for the Lord's Supper when compared with the editions of1786 and 1795. People must still announce their intention of participating in the Lord's Supper, and Public Confession is the only form stated. The enlarged edition of 1838[2] as well as a revised edition of 1842[3] remained unchanged. The General Synod, of which the Pennsylvania Ministerium was not a member from 1823 to 1853,[4] published liturgies in 1832 and 1847.[5] The Pennsylvania liturgy was then adopted, and a new, common agenda of 1855[6] shows for the first time that Private Confession may replace Public Confession. Confession is called "preparation for Holy Communion,"[7] and is mainly thought of as Public Confession. In the preface, however, it states that the communicants may make an appointment with the pastor for Private Confession rather than participating in the Public Confession.[1] This practice probably was not widespread, for it is not found in any of the agenda published by the General Synod,[2] the General Council,[3] or the General Synod in the South[4] after they had broken their relationship in the 1860's. However, "Communion of the Sick" is found. The influence might have come from the synods of Ohio and Tennessee. The latter joined the southern synods in 1886. As early as 1843 the Tennessee Synod had a liturgy for "Communion of the Sick."[5] First there was a confession of sins, usually read by the minister and answered affirmatively by the sick person; then the pastor absolved him, and Holy Communion followed.[6] A similar procedure is followed in these latter agenda.[7]

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[1] Hymn and Prayer-Book for the Use of such Lutheran Churches as use the English Language (New York: Hurtin and Commandinger, 1795). In addition to hymns, this book contains liturgies, Luther's Small Catechism, etc., cf. infra, p. 202.

[2] Cf. supra, p. 172.

[3] The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of the State of New York, A Collection of Hymns and a Liturgy, for the Use in Evangelical Lutheran Churches (Philadelphia, 1814). Other editions in 1817, 1827, 1834, and 1837, the two last printed in New York.

[4] Ibid., Liturgical Part, Section IX, pp. 54ff.: "Order of the service preparatory to the celebration of the Lord's Supper."

[5] Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania and Adjacent States, Kirchen-Agenda der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Gemeinen in Pennsylvanien (Pennsylvania, 1818).

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[1] J. B. Clark, "Lutherans," New S.H., VII, 86.

[2] Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania and Adjacent States, Kirchen-agenda der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Gemeinden in Pennsylvanien, (2nd, enlarged ed.; Lebanon, Pa., 1838). In the book there are two forms for Public Confession, both as preparations for the Lord's Supper, pp. 44-52.

[3] Liturgie und Kirchenagende für die Evangelisch-Lutherischen Gemeinden in Pennsylvanien, New York and Ohio (Philadelphia, 1842). Confession is made equivalent to preparation for the Lord's Supper: "Die Beichte oder Vorbereitung zum heiligen Abendmahl," pp. 155-168. The book was translated into English in 1847; a revised translation appeared in 1860.

[4] Cf. supra, p. 180.

[5] As far as confession and absolution were concerned, they followed the same pattern as other liturgies. Cf. Wentz, op. cit., pp. 229ff.

[6] Liturgie und Agenda für die Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in den Vereinigten Staaten (Philadelphia, 1855).

[7] Ibid., p. 273.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] The General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of North America, Book of Worship (Columbia, S.C., 1867). The hymnal contains in Section II (pp. 63-139), "Order of Ministerial Acts."

[3] Church Book for the Use of Evangelical Lutheran Congregations (Philadelphia, 1868).

[4] The United Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Churches in the South, The Book of Worship (Charleston, S.C., 1907). It is a copy of the first edition from 1868.

[5] Synod of Tennessee, Liturgy or Book of Forms for the Use of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (New Market, 1843), pp. 73-77.

[6] Nothing is mentioned about the sick person using his own words in the confession.

[7] The ritual for "Communion of the Sick" is still not established. Varieties are allowed, and the course of action is often left to the discretion of the pastor.

Also from the viewpoint of Private Confession, important incidents occurred about the turn of the century. In 1876 the United Synod in the South invited the General Synod and the General Council to make a common service.[1] The idea was accepted, on condition that "the pure Lutheran Agenda of the sixteenth century should be recognized as the norm and standard for this work."[2] Common orders were adopted for the main service, matins, and vesper in 1888,[3] for getting a common order for ministerial acts continued. In 1891 the General Council published Orders for Ministerial Acts from the Church Book.[4] Confession and absolution have an important place in the publication, and in the following year it was repeated verbatim in a Church Book presented by all three bodies.[5] There were no changes in the 1908-edition. It has been the basis for "Occasional services" in the new hymnal following the merger of 1918, as well as for the contemporary liturgical texts of the new American Lutheran Church. The preface deals with confession and absolution, Here a deep concern is shown both for the Lutheran doctrine, and for the value of confession and absolution:

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[1] Cf. Wentz, op. cit., pp. 235f.

[2] Quoted from New S.H., VII, 92.

[3] Ibid. These services were also accepted by English Synod of Missouri.

[4] The General Council, Orders for Ministerial Acts from the Church Book (Philadelphia, 1891).

[5] The Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America, Church Book For the Use of Evangelical Lutheran Congregations, ed. by The United Synod of the South, The General Synod, and The General Council (Philadelphia, 1892).

> "CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION.
> It is the right and duty of those in charge of congregations to make such examinations as may be necessary to determine the scriptural fitness, in doctrine and life, of persons applying for admission to the Communion. This should always be done when persons are admitted for the first time, and afterwards whenever necessary; so that it may be affirmed now, as at the beginning: "None are admitted except they be first proved." Augustana, Conf. Art. xxiv, 6.
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> "Before the service for Confession and Absolution the name of each one wishing to receive the Sacrament of the Supper should be given to the Minister, that only such as are qualified may be admitted to the table of the Lord, and prepared to receive its full benefit . . . ."[1]

Then follows a section dealing with Private Confession:[2]

> "It is of great importance that the Minister should have personal knowledge of those whom he admits to the Lord's Supper, and to this end should inquire unto the spiritual condition especially of the young and inexperienced, that he may instruct and encourage them as need may be. *Christian people also, for their growth in knowledge and grace, should use their privilege to confer personally with those appointed to watch for their souls, in order to have the instructions and consolations of the Word of God ministered to them individually*.
>
> "*Private Confession and Absolution is a service which has been used by the Church for such personal ministrations*. It is not to be regarded as necessary, nor to be exacted by any one; but it is provided and recommended for such as are particularly distressed and burdened in conscience on account of sin.
>
> "The enumeration of sins in Private Confession is entirely free; and the Minister should not curiously inquire into special forms of transgressions, or otherwise burden penitents by questions about what is not voluntarily confessed; for the ministry of divine Absolution is not appointed to investigate secret sins, neither is such investigation necessary to their forgiveness. *But penitents should be encouraged to confess the sins which specially burden their souls*, so that the proper direction and consolation may be given them.

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[1] *Church Book, op. cit.*, p. 364.

[2] Underlining in the following quotations is by the author.

> "Absolution is to be given only to such persons as are truly penitent, and sincerely determined to amend their ways; for without genuine repentance there is no forgiveness.
>
> "The person making Confession may use his own words, or the words here given, or any other suitable words."[1]

The next pages give suggestions of orders for both Private Confession[2] and Public Confession.[3] There is also an order for "Communion of the Sick" in which Private Confession is a part.[4] This book was originally planned for English-speaking congregations, but it was so well liked that it was published in German editions in 1906 and 1908.[5] In a Common Service Book of 1917[6] only a few ministerial acts are included. However, only two years later the Common Service Book of the Lutheran Church,[7] edited by the new United Lutheran Church in America, was published. Two other unchanged editions were printed in 1930 and 1943. Orders for Public Confession, Private Confession, and Communion of the Sick are found in the book. The order for Private Confession is shorter than the earlier editions by the General Council, and so is the preface, but the basic idea is the same[1]:

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[1] Church Book, op. cit., pp. 364f.

[2] Ibid., pp. 365f.

[3] Ibid., pp. 367-373.

[4] Ibid., pp. 385-388.

[5] The General Council, Kirchenbuch für Evangelisch-Lutherische Gemeinden (Philadelphia, 1906 and 1908). Private Confession, pp. 216f.; Public Confession, pp. 218f.; Communion of the Sick, pp. 343f.

[6] The General Synod, The General Council, The United Synod in the South, Common Service Book of the Lutheran Church (Columbia, S.C., 1917). Only Public Confession and Burial of the Dead are included in Ministerial Acts.

[7] Common Service Book of the Lutheran Church (Philadelphia, 1919).

> "Private confession and absolution has been used by the Church from ancient times, and persons who are burdened in conscience on account of sin may always seek the personal ministration of the Pastor before Holy Communion, or at any other time. In such case the Penitent may use his own words or the following Confession:
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> "Oh, God, our Heavenly Father, I confess unto Thee that I have grievously sinned against Thee in many ways; not only by outward transgression, but also by secret thought and desires, which I cannot fully understand, but which are all known unto Thee. I do earnestly repent, and am heartily sorry for these my offences, and I beseech Thee of Thy great goodness to have mercy upon me, and for the sake of Thy dear Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, to forgive my sins, and graciously to help my infirmities. Amen.
>
> "After the Confession, the Pastor shall say the Absolution:
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> "Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, hath had mercy upon thee, and for the sake of the sufferings, death, and resurrection of His dear Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, forgiveth thee all thy sins. Upon the confession which thou hast made, and in obedience to our Lord's command, I declare unto thee the entire forgiveness of all thy sins: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.
>
> "Then the Pastor shall say:
> The Blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be with thee alway. Amen."[2]

Concerning the relationship of Private Confession and Communion of the Sick, we read:

> "ORDER FOR THE COMMUNION OF THE SICK.
> The Lord's Supper shall be administered only to those who sincerely repent and believe in Jesus Christ, and who are able rightly to receive the Bread and Wine; whereof the Minister shall be reasonably assured before administering the Sacrament. . . .

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[1] The underlining in the quotation is by the present author.

[2] Common Service Book, op. cit., p. 409.

> "Confession and Absolution should always precede the Communion of the Sick. The sick person may use his own words, or the following Confession; or, the Minister may say these words, the sick person consenting thereto and affirming the confession as his own; or, the Minister may use the Order for Public Confession, or parts thereof."[1]

The prescribed confession and absolution, follow the exact Order of Private Confession.

For Lutheran chaplains in military service, a small service book was published in 1917,[2] and reprinted in 1941.[3] Nothing is said about Private Confession, but the preface to Holy Communion clearly states: "Those who purpose receiving the Holy Communion. . .should also confer privately with the Chaplain or Minister."[4]

(c) The Synod of Iowa had, from its organization in 1854, strong ties with Germany. Furthermore Wilhelm Loehe's influence was felt in the synod, and his Agenda[5] was adopted and used by the Iowa Synod. The first and second editions of Loehe's Agenda were published in 1844 and 1852. However, the second part of the Agenda containing the ministerial acts, did not appear until 1858. The Preface of the third complete edition of 1884, printed in Germany, states that the

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[1] Ibid., p. 410.

[2] General Council Publication Board, Army and Navy Service Book (Philadelphia, 1917 and 1918).

[3] National Lutheran Council, Army and Navy Service Book (New York, 1941).

[4] Ibid., p. 8.

[5] Loehe's Agenda is described on pp. 145f.

Agenda is used by the Synod of Iowa.[1] The Iowa Synod published the fourth edition in which this is confirmed.[2] Private Confession is stressed in the agenda,[3] as is also "Communion of the Sick."[4] The liturgy for the latter starts with greeting and exhortation, followed by pastoral counselling (seelsorgerischen Gespräch) and Private Confession.[5] Only then may Communion take place.

The synods of Buffalo and Ohio, which in 1930 merged with the Iowa Synod, had somewhat different practices. The Buffalo Synod[6] used confession in the service of church discipline. While kneeling, the congregation participated in Public Confession before Communion.[7] The synod also practiced penance and confession in public by offenders of the established church law.[1] It does not seem that Private Confession was used. The Ohio Synod, on the other hand, recommended Private Confession in connection with "Communion of the Sick" as early as 1830.[2] However, the ritual does not mention the possibility of the sick using his own words in the confession of sins. This might have been possible if he desired, but the later editions of 1870,[3] 1909,[4] and 1923[5] do not change or add this. The 1909-edition includes a rare ritual for Private Confession.[6] It occurs on a day before Holy Communion. The pastor gives an exhortation, stressing the Ten Commandments, followed by the first confessee going to the sacristy. He kneels before the pastor, makes his confession of sins, and receives the absolution of the pastor who lays on his hands. The same procedure is repeated for each parishioner.

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[1] Wilhelm Loehe, Agende für christliche Gemeinden des lutherischen Bekenntnisses (Nördlingen: E. H. Beck' schen Buchhandlung, 1884), Preface, p. 3: "der evang.-luth. Synode von Iowa u. a. St., bei welcher diese Agende in kirchlichen Gebrauch ist. . . ."

[2] Synode von Iowa und andern Staaten, Agende für christliche Gemeinden des lutherischen Bekenntnisses --- auf Grund der Agende von Wilhelm Löhe (Chicago: Wartburg Publishing Press, 1919).

[3] Cf. supra, pp. 146f . In the American edition, Private Confession is found on pp. 254ff. As a rule, Private Confession is connected with Holy Communion. The parishioner is to come to confession on Saturday. The sins may be confessed in common terms, but the confessee is urged to tell what specifically troubles him. It is recommended that absolution be declared by the laying on of hands.

[4] Loehe, op. cit., pp. 89-100.

[5] Ibid., p. 92.

[6] Cf. supra, p. 186.

[7] Lutheran Synod von Buffalo, Evangelische Lutherische Agende (1888). The agenda is adopted after the old agenda from Pommern and Saxony "with the necessary changes."

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[1] Penance in public is demanded by persons who have committed adultery: "Öffentliche Busse derer, die vor ihrer Copulation sich in Unehren zusammen gefunden," pretending to be "Jungeselle und Jungfrau." Penance in public is also to be made by single persons who have committed adultery with persons "outside marriage," and by thieves.

[2] Synod of Ohio, Liturgy or Formulary for the Use of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (Lancaster, 1830).

[3] Agende der Allgemeinen, Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode von Ohio und andern Staaten (Columbus, 1870). This agenda has both English and German texts.

[4] Synode von Ohio und andern Staaten, Agende für Evangelisch-Lutherischen Gemeinden (Columbus, 1909).

[5] Joint Synod of Ohio and Other States, A Liturgy for the Use of Evangelical Lutheran Congregations (Columbus, 1923).

[6] Agende etc., op. cit., pp. 48-55.

(d) The Augustana Synod used originally the Swedish liturgy of 1811. The revised form of 1894 was translated into English in 1905.[1] Here Private Confession is mentioned only in connection with "Communion of the Sick." A Church-Handbook of 1895 and 1899[2] gives this direction: "After the paster in private counselling has learnt to know the spiritual situation of the sick, and has delivered a short, penitential sermon, he is to recite the confession of sins, or let the sick himself do so. . . ."[3] An English edition of 1901[4] has no ministerial acts, but these are included in the 1928-edition.[5] There is a separate ritual for Public Confession,[6] but Private Confession is connected only with "Communion of the Sick."[7]

(e) On the whole the churches of Danish and Norwegian background followed the service books from their home-countries. Norway was ruled by Denmark for several hundred years (until 1814) and, therefore, the liturgical history of these two countries is quite similar. Private Confession did not have a separate section in the Norwegian-Danish "Altar-Books," but was part of the "Communion of the Sick." The service books published in English[1] and Norwegian[2] in 1902 state in this connection: "When the Minister has privately spoken to the sick person, in case this is necessary, he shall. . . ."[3] The absolution formula which is quite different from the ones used by other Lutheran churches, begins: "On behalf of God and my holy Office, I declare unto you. . . ."[4] The Norwegians in the United States followed to a great extent the revised edition of the Alter-bok published in Norway in 1920.[5] There were, however, no changes made in Private Confession, which was maintained in the ritual for "Communion of the Sick" as late as 1952.[6]

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[1] Abdel Ross Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism in America (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1955), p. 293.

[2] Kyrko-Handbok för Augustana-Synoden (Rock Island, Ill., 1895 and 1899).

[3] Ibid., pp. 82f.

[4] Hymnal and Order of Service (Rock Island, Ill., 1901). "Communion of Sick" is also omitted in an earlier publication: Church Book of the Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod (Rock Island, Ill., 1898).

[5] Church Service Book and Ministerial Acts of the Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod of North America (Illinois: Augustand Book Concern, 1928).

[6] Ibid., pp. 137ff.

[7] Ibid., pp. 235ff.

(f) When the constituents of the National Lutheran Council (the major ones have been discussed above) published the Service Book and Hymnal in 1958,[7] many compromises had to be made.[8]

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[1] The Orders of Service and Ministerial Acts of the Norwegian Lutheran Church (Minneapolis, 1902).

[2] United Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, Alterbog for Den Norske Kirke (Minneapolis, 1902).

[3] Ibid., p. 81; English Edition, p. 66.

[4] Ibid., pp. 82f.

[5] Wentz, op. cit., p. 296.

[6] United Norwegian Lutheran Church (The Evangelical Lutheran Church), Altar Book (Minneapolis, 1952), pp. 95f.

[7] Service Book and Hymnal of the Lutheran Church in America (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publ. House; Rock Island, Ill.: Augustana Book Concern; Blair, Nebr.: Lutheran Publ. House; Hancock, Mich.: Finnish Lutheran Book Concern; Philadelphia, Pa.: United Lutheran Publication House; Columbus, Ohio: Wartburg Press, 1958).

[8] Cf. ibid., "Preface to the Liturgy," pp. vi-x; and "Introduction to the Common Hymnal," pp. 285-287.

The present book has two orders for Public Confession. The first is called "A Brief Order for Public Confession,"[1] to be used when the confession immediately precedes the service of the day. After a common confession of sins, the pastor declares absolution with "as a Minister of the Church of Christ, and by his authority," or "by the authority of God and of this our office and ministry." The pastor may or may not lay his hand on the heads of the penitent who are kneeling. He may even omit "I declare unto you," and instead just say: "the Almighty and merciful God grant unto you. . . ."[2] The other form called "The Order for Public Confession,"[3] provides for special services on a day before Holy Communion. This service includes readings from the Bible, a sermon, an exhortation, questions to the congregation on penitence, trust, and promise. There follows a common confession of sins, whereafter the pastor declares absolution "as a Minister of the Church of Christ, and by his authority." If he prefers, the pastor may add a passage stating that absolution is valid only for penitents and believers.[4]

The 1958-hymnal and service book is the Music Edition, and has only a few special services.[5] These services will all appear in the "Text Edition," not yet published. Liturgical

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[1] Ibid., pp. 247f.

[2] Cf. ibid., p. 248.

[3] Ibid., pp. 249-252.

[4] Cf. ibid., p. 252.

[5] In addition to the two orders for Public Confession, there are orders for baptism of infants, confirmation, burial of the dead, and marriage. Cf. ibid., pp. 242-274.

Texts,[1] a book containing all the occasional services,[2] includes Private Confession three places. "Order for Private Confession and Absolution"[3] is similar to the one adopted in the United Lutheran Church's service book of 1919, and quoted above.[4] In "Order for the Visitation of the Sick,"[5] the minister is directed to visit the sick in his congregation as soon as possible, and "be called in time, that the sick person may be examined, instructed and comforted while fully able to understand what is done."[6] The pastor is to comfort the sick person, and help him with his afflictions. The suggested order is not compulsory, but left to the minister's discretion. However, it is recommended that the pastor use the "Order of Private Confession" or "Communion of the Sick." "Order for Communion of the Sick"[7] is, like the "Order for Private Confession," adopted according to the 1919 service book of the United Lutheran Church. As quoted above,[1] Private Confession should always take place before the administration of the Lord's Supper.

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[1] Liturgical Texts (Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publication House).

[2] There are twenty-four occasional services listed in the book. They are accepted by the joint commission on liturgy, and are not listed in the Music Edition because of "limitation of space." Cf. Service Book and Hymnal, op. cit., Preface, p. x. This book was made available from the library of the National Lutheran Council in New York City through the courtesy of Dr. David Granskou.

[3] Ibid., pp. 52f.

[4] Supra, p. 207. There are two minor additions: (1) After the confessee has said "I confess. . .not only by outward transgressions" is added in parenthesis: especially the sin of - - - -; (2) The pastor "may place his hand on the head of the Penitent" is added before the pastor says the absolution.

[5] Ibid., pp. 78-96.

[6] Ibid., p. 78.

[7] Ibid., pp. 96-101.

2. The Synodical Conference Constituents.

(a) Compared to other Lutheran churches of German background, the Missouri Synod, by far the largest body in the Synodical Conference,[2] has a simple liturgical history. A revised form was published in 1856,[3] built on the Saxon Agenda.[4] New editions followed in 1866, 1876, 1880, 1890, 1896, 1902, and 1912; all in German. There is a special service for Public Confession,[5] but Private Confession is mentioned only in connection with Communion of the Sick.[6] Following an exhortation to the sick with the relatives present, they are then asked to leave the pastor and "patient" alone. If the person is very sick, he may confess by answering briefly to the questioning of the pastor who is also to ask the confessee if there are particular matters troubling him. The sick person may prefer to repeat verbatim a confession read by the pastor. Finally, following the person's affirmation that his confession is sincere, the pastor absolves him. A revised German edition of 1922 has no changes in the order of Communion of the Sick.[1] Several English editions,[2] published by the Missouri Synod, and a special Army edition of 1942,[3] follow the same practice in Communion of the Sick, and include no special order for Private Confession.

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[1] Cf. *supra*, p. 208.

[2] Membership and size of bodies are stated *supra*, p. 188.

[3] *Kirchen-Agenda für Evangelisch-Lutherischen Gemeinden - zusammengestellt aus den alten rechtgläubigen Sächsischen Kirchen-Agenden* (St. Louis, 1856, 1866, 1876, 1880, 1890, 1896 1902, 1912). There may be other editions.

[4] Wentz, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

[5] *Ibid.*, (1896), pp. 91ff.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 29-38.

(b) Wisconsin Synod is the other larger body of the Synodical Conference. In an Agende of 1896,[4] the same practice as that of the Missouri Synod is found. Again there is a special service for Public Confession,[5] no order for Private Confession, but instructions for Communion of the Sick.[6] Before the Lord's Supper, exhortation, questions, and answers are given; then the sick person shall be given opportunity "to tell what especially is troubling his conscience."[7]

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[1] Kirchenagende für Evangelisch-Lutherischen Gemeinden in "mehrfach veränderter Form herausgegeben" (St. Louis, 1922), pp. 147-150.

[2] Church Liturgy for Evangelical Lutheran Congregations of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession (St. Louis, 1881 and 1891; Pittsburgh, 1904). Liturgy and Agenda (St. Louis, 1917). This was the first complete service book in English published by the Missouri Synod. Pocket editions of 1918 and 1921 concerning Private Confession are similar, and so is an enlarged, revised edition of 1921. Cf. also The Pastor in the Sickroom (St. Louis, 1912), pp. 54-56.

[3] Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Service Manual for Lutheran Chaplains Serving with the Forces of the United States (Illinois, 1942).

[4] Evangelisch-Luther. Synode von Wisconsin u.a. Staaten, Agende (Milwaukee, Wisc., 1896).

[5] Ibid., pp. 38-49.

[6] Ibid., pp. 348-355.

[7] Ibid., p. 353.

(c) The present hymnal and agenda for member churches of the Synodical Conference were published twenty years ago. The Lutheran Hymnal[1] has a declared absolution by the pastor in "The Order of Holy Communion."[2] In addition there is a special "Order of the Confessional Service."[3] After a hymn and Scripture reading, a confessional address or exhortation is given. This is followed by a common confession of sins, questions from the pastor concerning repentance and purpose, with his absolution declared "by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word. . .and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ."[4] However, the order for Public Confession permits the ministers to ask questions, which may also be used in Private Confession[5]:

> "And now I ask you before God, who searcheth the heart:
> 1. Do you sincerely confess that you have sinned against God and deserve His wrath and punishment? -- Then declare so by saying: I do confess.
>
> Verily, you should confess, for Holy Scripture declares: If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.
>
> "2. Do you heartily repent of all your sins committed in thought, word and deed? Then declare so by saying: I do repent.
>
> Verily, you should repent, as did the penitent sinners: King David, who prayed for a contrite heart; Peter, who wept bitterly; the sinful woman; the prodigal son; and others.

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[1] The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, The Lutheran Hymnal (St. Louis, 1941).

[2] Ibid., pp. 15ff.

[3] Ibid., pp. 46-49.

[4] The same absolution formula is used in the different connections.

[5] This was reported to the author by several Missouri-pastors practicing Private Confession. Cf. Part III for the extent of this practice.

> "3. Do you sincerely believe that God, by grace, for Jesus' sake, will forgive you all your sins: Then declare so by saying: I do believe.
>
> Verily, you should so believe, for Holy Scripture declares: God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
>
> "4. Do you promise that with the aid of the Holy Ghost you will henceforth amend your sinful life? Then declare so by saying: I do promise.
>
> Verily, you should promise, for Christ, the Lord, says: Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.
>
> "5. Finally, do you believe that through me, a called servant of God, you will receive the forgiveness of all your sins? Then declare so by saying: I do believe.
>
> "As you believe, even so may it be unto you. Upon this your confession etc. . . ."[1]

The Lutheran Agenda[2] includes the order for Communion of the Sick.[3] After the confession of sins, the pastor asks three questions similar to those used in Public Confession:

> "Dost thou humbly acknowledge and heartily lament thy sins? --- I do.
>
> "Dost thou believe that God, thy merciful Father, for the sake of Jesus Christ, thy Savior, pardoneth all thine offences? --- I do believe.
>
> "Art thou resolved, if God prolong thy life, to lead the remainder of thy life in His fear and to His glory? --- I am resolved.

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[1] The Lutheran Hymnal, op. cit., pp. 47f.

[2] The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North American, The Lutheran Agenda (St. Louis, 1941).

[3] Ibid., pp. 62-66.

> "Be it unto thee according to thy faith. And I, by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, upon this thy confession, forgive thee all thy sins in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost."[1]

The present examination of American Lutheran service books and agenda may be summarized in four points, the first two being somewhat surprising:

(1) The Synodical Conference, whose members are regarded as belonging to the most conservative branch of American Lutheranism, has never found a special order for Private Confession necessary.

(2) The order of Private Confession was re-established by the General Council as a special service in the church. Connected with the merger of the General Synod, the United Synod in the South, and the General Council, the order of Private Confession was established, accepted and stressed by the new United Lutheran Church in America. However, the United Lutheran Church is the very church which inherited the confessional struggle during the nineteenth century. Furthermore, its confessional position is less strict than many other Lutheran bodies in the United States. Thus the United Lutheran Church, in which due to the confessional struggle, one might expect the practice of Private Confession to decrease more than among other Lutheran churches, is the church which has had an established order of Private Confession for the last fifty years.

(3) Apparently through the influence of the United Lutheran Church, the order of Private Confession in contemporary

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[1] _Ibid._, pp. 63f. The questions may be omitted in the conduct of Private Communion of the Sick. In that case, absolution follows the confession of sins and prayer.

Lutheranism is found in all service books (text books) used by pastors belonging to affiliates of the National Lutheran Council. This represents approximately two-thirds of all Lutheran pastors in the country.

(4) For a long time Private Confession has been included in the order for Communion of the Sick. Since the time of their organization, quite a few Lutheran synods have had this practice, and since the turn of the century, almost every church body has practiced it. At the present time all Lutheran churches have an established practice.

B. Luther's Small Catechism.

Service books and agenda are the pastors' directives for conducting the services. Usually some parts of them are found in hymnbooks used by the parishioners. However, the occasional services, to which the orders of Private Confession and Communion of the Sick belong, are seldom included in a common hymnbook. Consequently, based on the study of service books and agenda, a congregation may have had small knowledge of Private Confession even if it was familiar to the pastor.

One effective way to find the extent of which Private Confession was known by the people, is to inquire about the use of Luther's Small Catechism. In some editions the section on confession and absolution is lacking; in others it is included; still others contain the additional part "The Office of the Keys" which stresses the importance of confession and absolution. The intention of the following remarks is not to present an extensive study of Luther's catechism. This has been done by able church historians.[1] Neither is our intention to discuss all catechisms used by Lutherans in the United States. However, our intention, based on some of the results gained by church historians, and a selection of catechisms actually used in Lutheran congregations, is to get a picture of people's knowledge and information concerning confession and absolution by using Luther's Small Catechism in religious instruction. First, the different editions of the catechism concerning confession and absolution will be discussed; secondly, how widespread the use of the catechism has been and is; finally, which editions have been used and are used by the larger American Lutheran churches.

1. The Different Editions of Luther's Small Catechism.

Many years of work can be seen in the Small Catechism since it was first published in 1529.[2] Luther's main concern for writing the book was to give young people, as well as families a book of instruction which would simply state the central Biblical teachings. According to Reu,[1] there appeared at least eight editions of the Small Catechism during Luther's lifetime, most of them printed several times. All these editions contain the five chief parts of the catechism: The Ten Commandments, The Creed, The Lord's Prayer, The Sacrament of Baptism, and The Sacrament of the Altar. There are, however, significant differences about the section on confession and absolution. Since different editions were adopted by various Lutheran churches, the eight editions should be mentioned:

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[1] Cf. especially M. Reu, Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism (Chicago: Wartburg Publishing House, 1929); on pp. 395-401 Reu gives a bibliography of published works about Luther's catechism. The list contains several hundred books. Cf. also bibliography in New S.H., II, 449, and VII, 95.

[2] Cf. Reu, op. cit., pp. 7-24. In 1516 Luther preached on the Ten Commandments, and the following year on the Lord's Prayer. After writing a brief exposition of the commandments in 1517, he published it in 1518. The exposition of the Lord's Prayer was published in 1519, and in 1520 these two along with a third part: explanation of the Creed, were published. The publication had the form of "a confessional mirror," bearing the title: Eine kurze Form der zehn Gebote; eine kurze Form des Glaubens; eine kurze Form des Vaterunsers. About thirty catechisms were published from 1522-1529 by different authors. Luther probably did not regard them as fulfilling their purpose in instructing people, and in November 1529 he began a catechism "pro pueris et rudibus," which later became the Large Catechism. At the same time he felt that another catechism had to be written "pro pueris et familia." First he rewrote the three parts mentioned above. This work was finished in January 1529, and before March he had added the parts on Baptism and Holy Communion. In addition he wrote "The Table of Duties."

(1) The chart edition of January-March 1529 contained the five chief parts, morning and evening prayers, and benedictions. (2) The Low German edition of the charts, published April 1529, was similar to the original chart edition but omitted the prayers. (3) Luther's High German Wittenberg edition of May 1529 published in book form in addition to the parts in the first edition, contained a preface to pastors, the table of duties, and a marriage booklet. (4) The enlarged and revised Wittenberg edition of June, 1529, having still another four parts, one of which is "Short Form of Confession."[2] However, nothing is said here about the nature of confession. It is liturgical, and appears as an addition to the catechism. (5) The 1531 edition of the catechism is the final form, and this is the edition adopted in the Book of Concord. There are two important changes

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[1] Ibid., pp. 25-45.

[2] The other three are: The Baptism Booklet, German Litany with Music, and Three Collects.

as compared to earlier editions.[1] The second one is of great importance in our connection: the section on confession of sins is included in the catechism proper, and is placed between the parts on Baptism and Holy Communion. Further, the whole section on confession is rewritten. Luther calls it "How the Simple should be Taught to Confess." In connection with the first three questions, a definition of confession, and the nature of sins to be confessed is given.[2] Luther adds a liturgical part which gives different forms for private confession of sins.[3] (6) The Wittenberg High German editions from 1531 to 1546, built upon the 1531 edition mentioned above.[4] (7) The German editions printed outside Wittenberg from 1529 to 1546.[5] (8) Additions to Luther's catechism found from 1546. There are two additions, "The Office of the Keys," and "Christian Questions for those who want to take the Lord's Supper." The former is of great interest, because it was widely adopted in Luther's Small Catechism in spite of the fact that Luther is not the author! Reu shows that there are three different forms of "The Office of the Keys," based on three different sources,[1] but the most familiar formulation is probably the following:

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[1] The first change is an introduction to the Lord's Prayer with explanation.

[2] The entire section is quoted in connection with the discussion on the Lutheran Confession Books. Cf. supra, pp.41-43.

[3] The forms are quoted, supra, pp. 41f.

[4] There are seven printings.

[5] Reu, op. cit., pp. 36-38, names fifteen different printings.

[6] This is commonly agreed upon by church historians.

> "What is the Office of the Keys?
> Answer: It is the peculiar church power which Christ has given to His church on earth to forgive the sins of penitent sinners, but to retain the sins of the impenitent as long as they do not repent.
>
> "Where is this written?
> Answer: Thus writes the holy Evangelist John, chapter twentieth: The Lord Jesus breathed on His disciples and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.
>
> "What do you believe according to these words?
> Answer: I believe that, when the called ministers of Christ deal with us by His divine command, especially when they exclude manifest and impenitent sinners from the Christian congregation, and, again, when they absolve those who repent of their sins and are willing to amend,

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[1] Reu, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-44. "The Office of the Keys" is traced to Nurenberg Sermons for Children by Osiander and Sleupner, where there is a sermon about "The Office of the Keys" between sermons on Baptism and Holy Communion. Summaries were published and spread, and since the summaries on Baptism and Holy Communion followed Luther's thoughts in his catechism, people believe that he also was the author of "The Office of the Keys." Other editions are believed to have been influenced by Melanchton, and a third source is from Brenz.

"The Office of the Keys" are found together with Luther's writing on confession in editions of 1535, 1538, 1554, 1564, 1569, 1580, and 1584. In addition to Reu, cf. A. C. Mueller, "The Office of the Keys," a paper written to the Intersynodical Catechism Committee in the United States, 1959.

> this is as valid and certain, in heaven also, as Christ, our dear Lord, dealt with us Himself."[1]

In the catechisms, "The Office of the Keys" follows Luther's writing on confession.

Thus the editions and translations of Luther's Small Catechism, which spread over Europe and later over the whole Lutheran world, had appeared in several forms concerning confession and absolution: (a) Editions omitting entirely the part on confession; (b) editions having Luther's questions on confession but omitting the liturgical section; (c) editions containing both Luther's questions on confession and his liturgical addition; (d) editions having different forms of "The Office of the Keys" previous to Luther's writing on confession. Among the editions including the part on confession, this section is placed after the five chief parts in some cases; in others it is found between the fourth and the fifth sections (as in the Book of Concord); and in some editions, especially among those including "The Office of the Keys," Luther's Small Catechism has six chief parts, number five being "The Office of the Keys and Confession," and six "The Sacrament of the Altar." One must assume that the specific edition of catechism used in a church, played an important role in the knowledge and practice of Private Confession. Whenever the section on confession was omitted, people had less opportunity for instruction in it. On the other hand, when confession was included in the catechism, people knew about it, and more readily practiced it. The authority of the pastor as confessor was always stressed when "The Office of the Keys" was added.

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[1] The translation follows What Luther Says, I (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), 123. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, uses this edition of "The Office of the Keys" in catechisms; cf. for example Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism (St. Louis: Concordia Publ. House, 1943), pp. 181-185. The Missouri Synod, which is the publisher of What Luther Says, has the following note: "At first the Catechism contained five chief parts of Christian doctrine. The manual as we now know it dates from 1542. In 1531 a brief statement concerning the confession of sin, which had hitherto been appended to Baptism, was expanded and printed as the fifth part. Thus the Lord's Supper became the sixth part. In a letter to Christians at Frankfurt, Luther accounts for this insertion (W 30, III, 565f. -- SL 17, 2016ff.). Probably John Brenz was instrumental in the formulation of "The Office of the Keys and Confession," which appeared in no edition of the Catechism during Luther's lifetime. . . ," What Luther Says, op. cit., I, 119.

2. The Triumph of Luther's Small Catechism.[1]

The Small Catechism was not immediately adopted by all Lutherans. However it was soon accepted by large groups, and during the sixteenth century it was translated into several languages.[2] The catechism slowly gained doctrinal status, and following adoption in the Book of Concord in 1580, it replaced all other catechisms previously used by Lutherans. Since that time, the Small Catechism has been used in the homes, in the pastors' teaching of children, in his preaching, and in religious education in schools.[3]

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[1] The expression is used by Reu, op. cit., p. 87, for describing the development in Europe. However, it is just as valid for the entire Lutheran world.

[2] Several Latin and Greek translations; further, Hebrew, French, Dutch, Frisian, Polish, Lithuanian, Icelandic, Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish, and Danish translations. For details cf. Reu, op. cit., pp. 87-154; New S.H., II, 444-447.

[3] Cf. Konfirmasjonen i Den Norske Kirke gjennom 200 aar (Oslo, 1935), pp. 73.

To state details concerning the spread of Luther's catechism is beyond the scope of our discussion.[1] Briefly, the development was as follows: The period of Orthodoxy permitted no parishioners to participate in Holy Communion without a previous examination.[2] Pietism used the Small Catechism as the "unquestioned foundation for religious instruction," as well as a book on teaching of reading and languages.[3] Rationalism alone made a few vain attempts to replace Luther's catechism with another.[4] The common introduction of confirmation in Lutheranism during the period of Pietism,[5] strengthened the position of Luther's Small Catechism in religious instruction. This compensated to a large extent for the decline of examination before Holy Communion during the following centuries. Thus Luther's catechism has followed Lutherans wherever they lived. It has been and is used in religious education, in confirmation instruction, in churches, in schools, in homes, and on mission fields. Having been translated (in 1935) into 145 languages and dialects,[1] the Small Catechism is probably the most widespread book, next to the Bible, among Lutherans.

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[1] For details cf. Reu, op. cit., pp. 155-274.

[2] Cf. supra, pp. 132-138.

[3] As early as 1572, Clajus published a polyglot edition, having the Small Catechism in German, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, placed in columns beside each other. A section of this edition can be found in Reu, op. cit., Plate Seven (between pages 136 and 137). The most famous polyglot edition was published in Stockholm in the seventeenth century, having eight languages beside each other in columns. Cf. Reu, op. cit., Plate Thirteen between pages 336 and 337). The catechism was also widely used in the elementary schools in teaching children to read.

[4] Reu cites examples from Europe in his section on Rationalism, op. cit., pp. 225-246. In the United States, North Carolina, Lutherans used a rationalistic Helmsteadt Catechism until 1818; cf. Abdel Ross Wentz, The Lutheran Church in American History (Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publication House, 1923), pp. 98ff. Better known is Dr. F. H. Quitman's Catechism in New York, 1812, "full of rationalistic teaching." The book lasted only a few years. Cf. Wentz, op. cit., p. 97; Neve, op. cit., p. 51; Jacobs, op. cit., p. 317; Spaude, op. cit., pp. 368ff.

[5] Confirmation, in the Catholic understanding of the term, was rejected by Luther. However, influenced especially by Martin Bucer (1491-1551), confirmation entered many German Lutheran churches about a hundred years after the Reformation. Gradually it gained in strength, and Pietism saw it commonly adopted. For a short history of confirmation in Lutheranism, cf. W. Caspari, "Confirmation," New S.H., II, 223f; Ivar Welle,"Konfirmasjonens historie," Konfirmasjonen. . .etc., op. cit., pp. 8-44.

The Lutherans of this country have never differed from others in the use of the Small Catechism. It remains a basic text book for religious education, and has retained the unique position in the present day churches that it held among the first Lutheran congregations in America. "Catechization was from the beginning the main reliance for building up congregations. . . . The pastors were to teach continuously from ten to fifteen days of six hours each. They used the Catechism as a basis. . . . They dismissed no subjects until they were sure that conviction had been wrought."[2] "The catechism, Bible story, the committing to memory of copious Scropture texts. . .are prominent features of the every-day instruction."[3] "Luther's Catechism has frequently been taught under the most adverse and trying conditions in parochial schools and to confirmation classes poorly housed, in many places beyond description, but with admirable faithfulness."[1] Wolf is very explicit in his discussion on the Lutheran Church and culture by saying: "The crowning feature of the Lutheran Church is her system of specific Christian instruction to the young. The book she prizes next to Holy Scriptures is her Catechism,. . . . A minister without this Catechism is an anomaly in the Lutheran Church. He is out of his element."[2]

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[1] Ivar Holsvik, "Laereboeker i kristendomskunnskap," Konfirmasjonen. . .etc., p. 72.

[2] Edmund J. Wolf, The Lutherans in America (New York: Hill and Co., 1889), p. 377.

[3] Jacobs, op. cit., p.12.

3. Editions of Luther's Small Catechism Used in the United States.

Having stated the common use of Luther's catechism, the question is: what editions are found? The one deleting or including the section on confession, the one containing also the liturgical part on confession, or the combined section on confession and "The Office of the Keys?" The knowledge of both the early and contemporary Lutheran churches concerning Private Confession is dependent on the answer to these questions.

(a) The earliest Lutheran settlers in America brought their catechisms along. The Dutch congregations of New York frequently had sermons on Luther's catechism in the afternoon,[3] from an edition which contained "The Office of the Keys," "Confession," and even Luther's questions for communicants.[4]

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[1] Reu, op. cit., pp. 287f.

[2] Wolf, op. cit., p. 482.

[3] Jacobs, op. cit., pp. 41f.

[4] Reu, op. cit., p. 275.

The Swedes in Delaware used the same edition except for Luther's questions. In 1648 the catechism was translated into the language of the Delaware Indians,[1] and hundreds of copies in the Indian language were being sent from Sweden by the turn of the century.[2]

(b) The German settlers in the East brought along a variety of catechisms. Muehlenberg records finding more than fifty different catechisms and hymnbooks in his congregation.[3] Zinzendorf translated Luther's catechism in the beginning of the 1740's, which included "The Office of the Keys" as the fifth part.[4] In 1749 the Pennsylvania Ministerium published an edition of the Small Catechism which remained for many years.[5] Muehlenberg confirmed its use in "nearly all our united congregations."[6] The 1749 catechism was a reprint of Luther's 1531 edition, and contained the section on confession. In 1787 the Ministerium adopted a revised edition which was commonly used until 1857. Luther's Small Catechism which was reprinted many times, was published in separate books as well as hymnals.[1] It contains both "The Office of the Keys" and "Confession."

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[1] Cf. Wolf, op. cit., pp. 390f.; Reu, op. cit., p. 276.

[2] Neve, op. cit., p. 23; Reu, op. cit., pp. 275f.

[3] Reu, op. cit., p. 276.

[4] Neve, op. cit., p. 35; Reu, op. cit., pp. 276f.

[5] Reu, op. cit., pp. 277f. In addition to Luther's catechism, the edition had orders of salvation, Psalms, a hymn, and a multiplication table!

[6] Ibid., p. 278.

In 1749 the catechism was translated into English by a Pennsylvania pastor,[2] however, no copies remain. In 1795 another translation was published in New York,[3] containing, as all other editions at this time, both "The Office of the Keys" and "Confession."[4] A few years later, in 1816, still another edition was published in English by Philip Mayer.[5] This translation had only the five chief parts of Luther's catechism, omitting both "The Office of the Keys" and "Confession." The book was adopted in 1825 by the General Synod and thus an official catechism was accepted without the confessional section.[1] However, all churches affiliated with the General Synod did not necessarily use a catechism without the section on confession. An edition published in 1811 which circulated widely in the southern synods, had "Confession" as well as "The Office of the Keys."[2] Further, as Reu points out,[3] the new immigration from Europe in the ninteenth century, brought several different editions of Luther's catechism to this country, many of which were reprinted in the United States.

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[1] For example: Der Kleine Catechismus des sel. D. Martin Luthers (Germantown: Willmeyer, 1795), "The Office of the Keys" and "Confession" appear on pp. 17ff.; Das Gesangbuch (3rd ed., 1803), published by "Vereinigten Evangelisch-Lutherischen Gemeinden in Pennsylvanien und den benachbarten Staaten" has an additional section which includes Luther's Small Catechism, "The Office of the Keys" and "Confession" are found on pp. 7f.; Der Kleine Catechismus (Philadelphia: Mentz and Sohn, 1833), has "The Office of the Keys" and "Confession" on pp. 24ff. Reu, op. cit., p. 279, mentions nine other editions, which comprise "only a few."

[2] Peter Brunnholtz, who also was involved in the German 1749 edition. Cf. Reu, op. cit., pp. 279 and 283; Jacobs, op. cit., p. 325.

[3] Hymn and Prayer-Book for the Use of such Lutheran Churches as use the English Language (New York: Hurtin and Commandinger, 1795).

[4] Ibid., pp. 97f. The book has 240 translated hymns, and 163 pages of instruction material. The book honors "the late Dr. Henry Muhlenbergh, who died in the year 1787" (p. 143), and makes therefore a clear reference to Pennsylvanian influence.

[5] Instruction in the Principles and Duties of the Christian Religion (Philadelphia, 1816).

The Book of Concord, published in 1851,[4] may have had some influence toward a catechism according to the confessional standard of the Lutheran churches. There was at least a desire to get more similarities in the catechism editions.[5] A catechism was published in English in 1854, and three years later in German with a reprint in 1862,[6] having both "The Office of the Keys" and "Confession."[1] These books also contained a section on confirmation and confirmation-examination, a part of which was Private Confession.[2] The book was commonly adopted by the General Council, but was also widely used in other synods in the East.[3] From 1868,[4] however, the Council might have felt that Luther did not write "The Office of the Keys." This part was excluded in the following editions, and Luther's writing on "Confession" was again placed between the fourth and fifth part of the catechism, as in the original 1531 edition.[5] This edition was also the basis for a revised edition of Luther's text, which the General Synod, The United Synod in the South, The General Council, and The Joint Synod of Ohio intended to publish.[6] This edition was not commonly accepted.[7]

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[1] Cf. for example: The General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States of North America, Hymns for Public and Private Worship in The Evangelical Lutheran Church (16th ed.; Philadelphia, 1850), which has only the five chief parts of Luther's catechism in an additional section, pp. 753-790. The hymnal refers to the first edition of 1828, which is like the 1850 edition concerning the catechism. Later editions, The Book of Worship (Columbia, S.C., 1867) and The Book of Worship (Philadelphia, 1871), also have catechisms without the section on confession.

[2] Published by Paul Henkel. Cf. Reu, op. cit., p. 281.

[3] Ibid., pp. 282f.

[4] The Christian Book of Concord (Newmarket, Va., 1851).

[5] Cf. Reu, op. cit., pp. 279f., and 285.

[6] Der Kleine Katechismus Dr. Martin Luthers nebst verschiedenen belehrenden und erbauenden Zusätzen, wie auch beigefügter unveränderter Augsburgischer Confession (Sunnytown, Pa., 1862).

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[1] Ibid., pp. 23f.

[2] "Beicht und Bekenntniss eines Beicht-Kindes, vor einem ordentlichen Kirchen-Diener." Ibid., pp. 83f.

[3] Cf. Reu, op. cit., p. 280.

[4] Reu, op. cit., p. 280, refers to the Kirchenbuch of 1877 as the first place "The Office of the Keys is omitted. However, the Church Book for the use of Evangelical Lutheran Congregations (Philadelphia, 1868), section XII, 39-58; and Sonntag schulbuch für Evangelisch-Lutherische Gemeinden (Philadelphia, 1876), pp. 27-40, have Luther's Small Catechism built on the 1531 edition, and therefore without "The Office of the Keys."

[5] Some of the editions after 1877: Sunday-School Book for the Use of Evangelical Lutheran Congregations (Philadelphia, 1878 and 1896), pp. 20-29; Kirchenbuch für Evangelisch-Lutherische Gemeinden (Philadelphia, 1906 and 1908), pp. 338-346 (the books are similar to an English edition of 1892); Joseph Stump, An Explanation of Luther's Small Catechism (Philadelphia, 1909).

[6] Cf. Reu, op. cit., p. 286.

[7] Ibid.

However the merger of the three former synods into the United Lutheran Church in 1918, brought a degree of standardization. More than twenty editions of Luther's catechism are in use among members on the United Lutheran Church.[1] However, the official text is found in their common hymnal and service book.[2] The section on "The Office of the Keys" is omitted, as is the liturgical part on confession. Luther's questions on confession, which, from the instructional viewpoint, are the most important regarding Private Confession are retained.

(c) The Missouri Synod, the largest group descended from German settlers in the Midwest, has always included "The

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[1] Most of them are in English, but there are several German editions. Further translations are found in quite a few languages where the United Lutheran Church has activities and congregations. Cf. Reu, op. cit., pp. 310-313.

[2] Common Service Book of The Lutheran Church (Philadelphia, 1919), pp. 515-528. This is the official text (confirmed by a study presented to the Intersynodical Catechism Committee in 1955). The committee made a survey of all official catechism editions used in the United States at present by the larger Lutheran church bodies. The survey is submitted to the author by courtesy of Dr. Allan Jahsmann, a committee member representing the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The text for the United Lutheran Church (similar to that of the former General Council), is quoted on p. 54. For future references to the survey, the abbreviation Survey ICC will be used.

Office of the Keys and Confession" in its catechism,[1] as has the Wisconsin Synod.[2] The other three large synods of German background, Ohio, Buffalo, and Iowa, merged in 1930 to become The American Lutheran Church. Previously Ohio and Buffalo used catechisms with texts similar to Missouri and Wisconsin,[3] while the Iowa Synod since 1904 used a catechism edited by M. Reu.[1] This catechism was later reprinted several times,[2] has been translated into English, and was the common catechism of the American Lutheran Church as well as other synods.[3] It still has a wide circulation. Luther's "Confession" is placed between the fourth and fifth parts of the catechism.[4] Reu has omitted the liturgical part of Luther's writing. As for "The Office of the Keys," Reu places this section after "Confession," but he remarks in a footnote that the questions are not written by Luther.[5]

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[1] The Missouri Synod built their catechism on an edition by Dietrich in 1627, with "The Office of the Keys" and "Confession" being integral parts. Cf. J. C. Dietrich, Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1902). The book is a translation from an earlier German edition. Cf. also: Kirchen-Gesangbuch für Evangelisch-Lutherische Gemeinden (St. Louis, 1865), pp. 276ff.; Sunday School Hymnal (Pittsburg, 1901), pp. 71-114; the bi-language edition by the Synodical Conference, Kurze Auslegung des Kleinen Katechismus Dr. Martin Luthers -- A Short Exposition of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1905); Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1943); Survey ICC, pp. 50 and 52. Reu, op. cit., pp. 313f., mentions several other editions, as well as special books intended for those teaching catechism. For contemporary teaching, cf. for example: H.C. Boettcher, Instructor's Manual for Luther's Small Catechism, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1946), Unit 31.

[2] The Wisconsin Synod uses the heading "The Ministry of the Keys," cf. Survey ICC, pp. 50f. The official explanation of the catechism was prepared by G. Gausewitz, Dr. Martin Luthers Kleiner Katechismus (Milwaukee, Wisc.; Northwestern Publishing House), the book also translated into English. Cf. also W. Dallmann, Luther's Small Catechism with Explanations (Milwaukee, Wisc.: Northwestern Publishing House, 1925).

[3] The Ohio Synod until 1882 had a catechism built on German editions. Cf. New S.H., II, 447. The author found a copy in a hymnal, published 1880 in Columbus, Ohio; the catechism being found on pp. 424-436. "The Office of the Keys" and "Confession" is placed between the parts on Baptism and Holy Communion. Based on Dietrich's book, a new exposition was published in 1882, Dr. M. Luthers Kleiner Katechismus, in Frage und Antwort ausgelegt (Columbus, Ohio, 1882). No changes were made concerning the content of the catechism. Cf. also Dr. Martin Luther's Smaller Catechism (16th ed.; Columbus, Ohio: The Lutheran Book Concern, 1885); The Simplified Catechism (Columbus, Ohio: The Lutheran Book Concern, 1921). The Buffalo Synod used the catechisms of Ohio.

(d) The Scandinavian Lutherans in America have used several editions of Luther's catechism, most of which are either in their mother tongue or translations of these.[6]

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[1] M. Reu, Erklärung des Kleinen Katechismus Dr. Martin Luthers, mit drei Anhängen (Chicago: Wartburg. Publ. House, 1904).

[2] Cf. M. Reu, An Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism (Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1947). The ninth printing of the book appeared in 1958; in the Preface, Reu writes: "The explanation of the Catechism offered in this volume was first published in 1904. Since then more than one hundred thousand copies have been sold."

[3] Ibid., p. 4; M. Reu, Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism (Chicago, Ill.: Wartburg Publishing House, 1929), p.316.

[4] M. Reu, An Explanation etc. . ., op. cit., pp. 19f.

[5] Ibid., p. 20. Cf. Survey ICC, pp. 50f. A note in the Survey, p. 50 remarks: "Reu has The Office of the Keys and Confession in an appendix."

[6] M. Reu, Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism (Chicago, Ill.: Wartburg Publishing House, 1929), pp. 317f., gives a survey of editions used in the past and present.

The Danish bishop, Erik Pontoppidan's[1] explanation of Luther's Catechism has been widely used among the Norwegians. For some periods in American Lutheranism, this book rated little less than confessional status.[2] Due to the Danish-Norwegian edition of Luther's Small Catechism based on a Latin translation, the section on "Confession" was omitted in 1537,[3] and again in the official revision in 1628.[4] Bishop Pontoppidan, who wrote his explanation in 1737, built his text on the 1628 edition, and thus he published a catechism in which nothing except two small remarks[5] are found about confession of sins to the pastor. Later translations and editions of this book into English, made no changes.[1] Thus most Lutherans of Norwegian background in this country were taught a catechism in which "Confession" was not included. Only this century showed a change. It may be due partly to the fact that other catechisms in English usually contained the part on "Confession," and partly to the fact that "Confession" is found in the official edition of Luther's Small Catechism which the churches adopted.[2] The later catechisms have Luther's questions on "Confession," but omit the liturgical part.[3] The section on "The Office of the Keys" is commonly excluded.[4]

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[1] Erik Pontoppidan, Sanhed til Gudfryktighed (1737). For the widespread use of the book, cf. Nelson-Fevold, op. cit., I, 10, 30f., 78, 104, 135, 250, 256; Nelson, op. cit., II, 6, 135, 177, 239.

[2] Cf. the same references from Nelson-Fevold and Nelson. When, for example, a merger plan was discussed among Norwegian synods in 1888, the basis for union was "we regard. . .the Holy Scriptures, the confessions. . . , and the catechism now in use in our synods and congregations as a completely sufficient basis for church union," quoted from Nelson, op. cit., II, 5f. The catechism "in use" was that of Pontoppidan.

[3] Cf. Kaare Stoylen, Arv og Ansvar (Oslo: Land og Kirke, 1958), pp. 51f. The catechism was translated by the Danish bishop Peder Palladius.

[4] Edited by Bishop Resen. Cf. ibid., pp. 52f.

[5] Erik Pontoppidan, Sannhet til Gudfryktighet (Toensberg, Norway, 1941), p. 179;

> "Question 684. To whom do you confess your sins?
> Answer: First to God, . . . then to our neighbor,
> And finally one shall confess to the confessor
> (soul-carer).
> Question 685. What sins are to be confessed?
> Answer: . . .those sins which are very troublesome
> and leave no peace in conscience. . . .
> When emptying one's heart for the confessor,
> he can help conscience against such sins by
> giving education, advise, and comfort. . . ."

The Augustana Synod of Swedish background seems to have had a development somewhat similar to that of the

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[1] The first translation into English appeared in 1841 by Eielsen. Cf. Reu, Dr. Martin Luther's etc. . ., pp. 317f. for special editions among Norwegian-Americans.

[2] The 1531 edition of Luther's Small Catechism is the official text. Cf. Sigurd Normann, Den Norske Kirkes Bekjennelsesskrifter (Oslo: Lutherstiftelsens Forlag, 1930), pp. 182-187.

[3] Cf. for example, The Lutheran Hymnary (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1913) published by a committee from The United Norwegian Lutheran Church, Norwegian Lutheran Synod, and Hauge's Lutheran Synod. In addition to hymns, the book contains the symbols of the churches. Luther's catechism is found in this section, including the section on "Confession." Cf. also: The intersynodical 1929 edition of Luther's catechism mentioned below; and P.H. Grimsby, An Explanation of the Catechism (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1941). In this book confession is connected with part five, the Lord's Supper, pp. 101f., but leaves an opening for Private Confession: "How is Confession before the Lord's Supper conducted? Those who intend to partake of the Lord's Supper confess their sins either privately or together, and receive absolution from the pastor."

[4] Survey ICC, pp. 50-55.

Norwegians. An edition of Lindblom's catechism, edited in Sweden in 1811, received widespread use among the Swedish-Americans in the nineteenth century. This catechism omitted the section on "Confession."[1] However, the Augustana Synod officially reintroduced this part in the catechisms of this century,[2] though it omitted the liturgical part as well as "The Office of the Keys." The Danes, like the Norwegians brought along Pontoppidan's edition,[3] but changed to Balslev's book, first published in 1856.[4] This book was translated into English, and includes the section on "Confession."

(e) At the beginning of the century, there were quite a few Lutheran congregations in the United States with backgrounds other than German or Scandinavian.[5] However, all except two groups, the Finns and Slovaks, have merged with larger churches.

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[1] M. Reu, Dr. Martin Luther's etc. . ., op. cit., p. 282.

[2] Cf. Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation (Rock Island, Ill.: Augustana Book Concern, 1902); Luthers Lilla Katekes med Förklaring (Rock Island, Ill.: Augustana Book Concern, 1922); Survey ICC, p. 52.

[3] M. Reu, Dr. Martin Luther's etc. . ., op. cit., pp. 282f.

[4] C. F. Balslev, Luthers Cathekismus med en kort Forklaring (1856). It is translated into English under the title: Luther's Catechism with a Brief explanation. A Textbook for the Unconfirmed Youth by the Late Bishop C. F. Balslev (Blair, Nebr.: Danish Lutheran Publishing House, 1915).

[5] The editions of Luther's Small Catechism in congregations using the "mother tongue," will usually be translations from the official text of the larger church body to which they belong. According to M. Reu, Dr. Martin Luther's etc. . ., op. cit., p. 310, Luther's catechism in 1929 was taught in 28 languages within the United States.

The Slovaks have been a member of The Synodical Conference for many years and will probably join the Missouri Synod in due time. Their official text of the catechism follows that of the Missouri Synod. The Finns are divided into several groups. However, all use Luther's Small Catechism, and have included the section on "Confession."[1]

(f) At the present time there have been two attempts to make a common edition of Luther's Small Catechism for all Lutheran churches in the United States. The first attempt occurred in the 1920's, hoping to publish the edition by 1929, exactly four hundred years after the first publication of Luther's catechism. The Missouri Synod "felt constrained not to participate in an official way,"[2] but most of the other bodies were represented.[3] The American 1929 edition is based on Luther's 1531 edition, but departs from it in three instances, one of which concerns the section on "Confession." As is written in the preface: "The second section of the part 'Of Confession' was omitted because its character is liturgical rather than catechetical."[4] Thus the catechism contains Luther's questions on confession placed between the fourth and fifth parts.[1] "The Office of the Keys" is missing in some printings, but found in others.[2]

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[1] Walter J. Kukkonen, Faith of our Fathers (New York: The American Press, 1957). The book explains Finnish Lutheranism for American readers, and has an additional section in which Luther's Small Catechism is found, including the section on "Confession" following Part Five, p. 188.

[2] Luther's Small Catechism. A New English Translation Prepared by an Intersynodical Committee. A Jubilee Offering 1529-1929 (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1929), p. 4.

[3] Committee members were from the following churches: Norwegian Lutheran Church, Joint Synod of Ohio, Augustana Synod, United Danish Church, Synod of Iowa, Lutheran Free Church, and United Lutheran Church. Cf. ibid., p. 6.

[4] Ibid., p. 5.

At the present time the American Lutherans, including the Missouri Synod, are making a second attempt towards agreeing on a common text of Luther's catechism. Sponsored by the Lutheran Intersynodical Committee on Parish Education in 1951, the new edition was published as a field test edition in 1960,[3] and completed in 1961. Since this edition may well become the standard American edition of Luther's Small Catechism, the text concerned with Private Confession is quoted:[4]

> "THE OFFICE OF THE KEYS.
> What is the "Office of the Keys?"
> It is that authority which Christ gave to his church to forgive the sins of those who repent and to declare to those who do not repent that their sins are not forgiven.
>
> "What are the words of Christ?
> Our Lord Jesus Christ said to his disciples, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.' -- John 20:23.

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[1] Ibid., p. 131.

[2] Survey ICC, p. 50, makes this remark: All editions of the New Translation have Confession. Some have the "Office of the Keys" (Wartburg Printing), some do not (Augustana Printing).

[3] Intersynodical Catechism Committee, The Small Catechism by Martin Luther. A Handbook of Basic Christian Instruction for the Family and the Congregation (1960). The quotations are given with permission from the copyright holder, Dr. Paul Lindberg.

[4] The section on "The Office of the Keys" and "Confession" is placed after the fifth chief part.

Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. -- Matthew 18:18"[1]

"CONFESSION.
What is private confession?[2]
Private confession has two parts. First, we make a personal confession of sins to the pastor, and then we receive absolution, which means forgiveness as from God Himself. This absolution we should not doubt, but firmly believe that thereby our sins are forgiven before God in heaven.

"What sins should we confess?
Before God we should confess that we are guilty of all sins, even those which are unknown to us, as we do in the Lord's Prayer. But *in private confession as before the pastor, we should confess only those sins which trouble us in heart and mind*.

"What are such sins?
We can examine our everyday life according to the Ten Commandments, for example, how we act toward father or mother, son or daughter, husband or wife, or toward the people with whom we work, and so on. We may ask ourselves whether we have been disobedient or unfaithful, bad-tempered or dishonest, whether we have hurt anyone by word or deed.

"How might we confess our sins privately?
We may say that we wish to confess our sins and to receive absolution in God's name. We may begin by saying, 'I, a poor sinner, confess before God that I am guilty of many sins.' *Then we should name the sins that trouble us*. We may close the confession with the words, 'I repent of all these sins, and pray for mercy. I promise to do better with God's help!

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 41. In a note is said that "The Office of the Keys" is not a part of the original texts of Luther's catechism, but is "in substance one of the teachings of Luther and the Reformation. This translation is based on the German text adopted by the Lutheran churches in Germany as a uniform text in 1957. The second question, 'What are the words of Christ?' is taken from the *Nuernberger Katechismus Predigten of 1533 by Osiander* . . .," pp. 44f.

[2] The underlining by the present author.

> "What if we are not troubled by any special sins?
> We should not torture ourselves with imaginary sins.
> If we cannot think of any sins (which would hardly ever happen), we need not name any in particular, but may receive absolution because we have already made a general confession to God.
>
> "How may we be assured of forgiveness?
> The pastor may pronounce the absolution by saying, 'By the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.' Those who are heavily burdened in conscience the pastor may comfort and encourage with further assurances from God's word."[1]

The findings of a survey on Private Confession of *Luther's Small Catechism* as used in the United States may be stated in the following four points:

(1) With a few exceptions in the last century - namely in some editions from the General Synod, the Norwegians, the Swedes, and partly the Danes - Luther's questions on "Confession" have always been included in the catechism.

(2) Usually the liturgical part of Luther's writing on "Confession" has been omitted.

(3) The section on "The Office of the Keys," which is not Luther's, seems to have been included by church bodies belonging to the Synodical Conference. Together with Luther's questions on "Confession," "The Office of the Keys has constituted the fifth chief part of the catechism, thus making "The

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 42f. In notes (p. 45) it is stated that the section on "Confession" was part of Luther's catechism and appeared between the chief parts four and five. Further it is remarked that Luther's examples on confession (the liturgical part) is omitted because they were "suited particularly to the times and conditions of Luther's day." In doing so, the committee felt that to keep "with Luther's note at the close of this part of the catechism: 'This is intended to be only one form of confession for ordinary or general use.'"

Sacrament of the Altar" the sixth and last part. In the other bodies, the section has been equally included and omitted. Whenever included, "The Office of the Keys" and "Confession" usually follow the five chief parts.

(4) The present tendency among the larger Lutheran bodies is to retain Luther's questions on "Confession," to omit the liturgical section, to keep an abbreviated form of "The Office of the Keys," and to place "The Office of the Keys" and "Confession" after the five main parts of the catechism.

Consequently, American Lutherans have usually been instructed in confession, and have had knowledge of Private Confession. For many churches, instruction also included "The Office of the Keys," with stress on Private Confession and the pastor's authority.

C. Hymnals.

An extensive study of Lutheran hymnals might have given some additional insight about Lutherans' knowledge of Private Confession in the past and present. Hymnbooks never were used only in the services, they were also devotional books in the home.[1] All hymnbooks include a section on penitential hymns, but give no information about Private Confession.[1] It is of greater importance in our connection to study the parts often added to the hymnbook. In this way we may find sections concerned also with Private Confession, i.e., sections on the orders of Private Confession and Communion of the Sick, sections containing Luther's Small Catechism including the part on "Confession," and sections with the Augsburg Confession.

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[1] Cf. Reu, Dr. Martin Luther's etc. . . ., p. 276; A. W. Blackwood, "Family Devotion," New S.H., XIII, 419; McNeill, op. cit., p. 190. Cf. also The General Synod, Hymns for Public and Private Worship in the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Philadelphia, 1828), Preface, p. v: "A portable size was adopted, not only for the sake of cheapness and convenience, . . . but also that Christians. . . may carry this volume with them on their journeys, and in their social walks, and into the field of labour."

Such an extensive research, it is felt, goes beyond the intention of this discussion. However, a sample of hymnals[2] gives us a pattern which presumably would show small changes, if a detailed survey had been made:

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[1] The author found only one exception; The Joint Synod of Ohio, Hymnal (Columbus, Ohio, 1880), No. 245 is a rather unique hymn giving an interpretation of confession and absolution. The following is a quotation of verses six through nine:

"The words which absolution give
Are His who died that we might live;
The minister whom Christ has sent
Is but His humble instrument.

"However great our sin may be,
The absolution sets us free,
Appointed by God's own dear Son
To bring the pardon He has won.

"When ministers lay on their hands,
Absolved by Christ the sinner stands;
He who by grace the Word believes,
The purchase of His blood receives.

"This is the Power of Holy Keys,
It binds and doth again release;
The Church retains them at her side
Our Mother, and Christ's holy Bride."

[2] The samples used are Lutheran hymnals in the hymn collection at Speer Library, Princeton Seminary, Princeton, N.J., Also a collection of hymnals at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, especially for checking earlier or later editions of hymnbooks from the Princeton collection.

(1) There are many editions of Lutheran hymnals containing nothing but hymns.[1] This is normal since educational material and agenda were published separately. However, most hymnals include additional sections.

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[1] *Erbauliche Lieder-Samlung zum Gottesdienstlichen Gebrauch in den Vereinigten Evangelisch-Lutherischen Gemeinden* (Germantown, 1786); Vereinigten Evangelisch-Lutherischen Gemeinden in Pennsylvanien und den benachbarten Staaten, *Gesangbuch* (6.ed.; Germantaun, 1814); *Ibid.* (7.ed.; Germantaun, 1829); *Ibid.* (Philadelphia, 1842); *Choice Selection of Evangelical Hymns For the Use of the English Evangelical Lutheran Church in New York* (New York, 1806); The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of the State of New York, *A Collection of Hymns and A Liturgy, for the use of Evangelical Lutheran Churches* (Philadelphia, 1814); *Ibid.* (Philadelphia, 1817); *Ibid.*, (Philadelphia, 1827); *Ibid.* (New York, 1834); *Ibid.* (New York, 1837); The General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States of North America, *Hymns for Public and Private Worship in the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia, 1828); *Ibid.* (16.ed.; Philadelphia, 1850); The General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States, *Augsburg Songs for Sunday Schools* (Philadelphia, 1885); *Ibid.* (2nd. ed.; Philadelphia, 1893); *Deutsches Gesangbuch für die Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in den Vereinigten Staaten* (Philadelphia, 1849); *Ibid.* (15th. ed.; Philadelphia, 1866); *Ibid.* (23rd. ed.; Philadelphia, 1872); *Ibid.* (Philadelphia, 1884); The General Synod, The General Council, and The United Synod of the South, *Common Service Book of the Lutheran Church* (Columbia, S.C., 1917); Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Ohio, *A Collection of Hymns and Prayers for Public and Private Worship* (Zanesville, Ohio, 1845); Joint Synod of Ohio, *Collection of Hymns For Public and Private Worship* (Columbus, Ohio, 1855); The First English District of the Joint Synod of Ohio and Other States, *Hymnbook* (Columbus, Ohio, 1908); Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod of North America, *Hemlandssaanger* (1892); The Augustana Synod, *Hymnal For Churches And Sunday-Schools* (Rock Island, Ill., 1899); The Augustana Synod, *A Hymnal and Order of Service* (Rock Island, Ill., 1901); The Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, *Psalmebog* (1881); *Ibid.* (Decorah, Iowa, 1890); *The Concordia Hymnal* (8th ed.; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publication House, 1932); *Ibid.* (1941); The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri and Other States, *The Lutheran Hymnal* (Baltimore, 1893); *Ibid.* (Baltimore, 1905); *Ibid.* (Pittsburgh, 1909); The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, *The Lutheran Hymnal* (St. Louis, 1941).

(2) *Luther's Small Catechism* is very often included in hymnbooks.[1]

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[1] *The Marburg Hymnbook* (Germantown, 1762); Vereinigten Evangelisch-Lutherischen Gemeinden in Pennsylvanien und den benachbarten Staaten, *Gesangbuch* (Germantaun, 1778), pp. 2-11; *Ibid.* (3rd. ed.; Germantaun, 1803), pp. 2-11; *Hymn and Prayer-Book for the Use of Such Lutheran Churches as use the English Language* (New York: Hurtin and Commandinger, 1795), pp. 91-100; The Ministerium of Pennsylvania and Adjacent States, *Church Book for the use of Evangelical Lutheran Congregations* (Philadelphia, 1868), pp. 39-58; *Ibid.* (Philadelphia, 1876); *Sonntagschulbuch für Evangelisch-Lutherische Gemeinden* (Philadelphia, 1876), pp. 27-40; *Sunday-School Book for the Use of Evangelical Lutheran Congregations* (Philadelphia, 1878), pp. 20-29; *Ibid.* (Philadelphia, 1896); The Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America, *Church Book For the Use of Evangelical Lutheran Congregations* (Philadelphia, 1892), pp. 268-287; *Ibid.* (Philadelphia, 1908); The General Council, *Kirchenbuch für Evangelisch-Lutherische Gemeinden* (Philadelphia, 1906), pp. 337-347; *Ibid.* (Philadelphia, 1908); The United Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the South, *The Book of Worship* (Charleston, S.C., 1907); The United Lutheran Church in America, *Common Service Book* (Philadelphia, 1919), pp. 515-528; *Ibid.* (Philadelphia, 1930); *Ibid.* (Philadelphia, 1943); United Lutheran Church in America, *The Parish School Hymnal* (Philadelphia, 1926), pp. 50-60; The Joint Synod of Ohio, *Hymnal* (Columbus, Ohio, 1880), pp. 424-436; The Evangelical Lutheran Church, *The Lutheran Hymnary* (Minneapolis, 1913), pp. li-lx; *Ibid.* (Minneapolis, 1935); Ev. Luth. Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States, *Kirchen-Gesangbuch für Evangelisch-Lutherische Gemeinden* (St. Louis, Mo., 1865), pp. 270-281; The English Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri and Other States, *Sunday School Hymnal* (Pittsburg, Pa., 1901), pp. 71-114.

(3) *The Augsburg Confession* is found quite frequently in hymnals published between the confessional struggle in the 1850's and the beginning of this century.[1]

(4) "Order for Communion of the Sick" is included in some hymnals of our century that have a section on ministerial acts.[2]

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[1] The General Synod, *Hymns for Public and Private Worship* (revised ed.; Philadelphia, 1870), pp. 791-832; *Ibid.* (Philadelphia, 1888); General Synod, *Book of Worship* (Philadelphia, 1899), pp. 209-233; *Deutsches Gesangbuch für die Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in den Vereinigten Staaten* (enlarged ed.; Philadelphia, 1892), pp. 8-30; *Ibid.* (Philadelphia, 1894); The Ministerium of Pennsylvania, *Church Book for the use of Evangelical Lutheran Congregations* (Philadelphia, 1868), pp. 1-38; *Ibid.* (Philadelphia, 1876); The Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America, *Church Book For the Use of Evangelical Lutheran Congregations* (Philadelphia, 1892), pp. 288-320; *Ibid.* (Philadelphia, 1908); Joint Synod of Ohio, *Hymnal* (Columbus, Ohio, 1880), pp. 437-468; The Evangelical Lutheran Church, *The Lutheran Hymnary* (Minneapolis, 1913), pp. xxii-l; *Ibid.* (Minneapolis, 1935); Ev. Luth. Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States, *Kirchen-Gesangbuch für Evangelisch-Lutherische Gemeinden* (St. Louis, Mo., 1865), pp. 282-312.

[2] The General Council, *Kirchenbuch für Evangelisch-Lutherische Gemeinden* (Philadelphia, 1906), pp. 262ff.; *Ibid.* (Philadelphia, 1908); The United Synod of the South, *The Book of Worship* (Charleston, S.C., 1907), pp. 237ff.; The United Lutheran Church in America, *Common Service Book* (Philadelphia, 1919), pp. 410-413; *Ibid.* (Philadelphia, 1930); *Ibid.* (Philadelphia, 1943); *Service Book and Hymnal* (future text edition, 196?), cf. *supra*, pp. 213f.

(5) "Order for Private Confession" is, by initiative of the General Council, found in hymnals published from the 1890's.[1] Later the order is included in the hymnal of the United Lutheran Church,[2] and in the text edition of a hymnal to be published by members of the National Lutheran Council.[3]

This evidence permits us to conclude that many Lutherans have had information on Private Confession surpassing that which was taught by the pastor, or only learned because memorization of Luther's catechism was a compulsory part of religious training.

SUMMARY

An examination of American handbooks and worship materials thus confirms the thesis that knowledge of Private Confession must have been quite common in American Lutheranism.

As for the practice of Private Confession, one may only assume it often occurred in connection with "Communion of the Sick," and not seldom in connection with announcement of Holy Communion. Further, one must believe that the practice has been encouraged where churches had a special order for Private Confession. The latter has been introduced by church bodies with a less confessional emphasis than most bodies not having a special order for Private Confession. If granted that confessional emphasis has nurtured the practice of Private Confession, one may assume that any decrease of practice of the "lenient" churches has been offset by their special order for Private Confession.

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[1] The Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America, Church Book for the Use of Evangelical Congregations (Philadelphia, 1892), pp. 364-373; Ibid. (Philadelphia, 1908); The General Council, Kirchenbuch für Evangelisch-Lutherische Gemeinden (Philadelphia, 1906), pp. 216ff.; Ibid. (Philadelphia, 1908).

[2] The United Lutheran Church in America, Common Service Book (Philadelphia, 1919), p. 409; Ibid. (Philadelphia, 1930); Ibid. (Philadelphia, 1943).

[3] Service Book and Hymnal (future text edition, 196?), cf. supra, pp. 213f.

Handbooks and worship materials say nothing about the extent to which Private Confession has been practiced. The historical observation of a decrease in the practice of Private Confession compared to the first three centuries of Lutheranism is not shaken. However, one must disagree with some theologians who maintain that the practice of Private Confession has almost disappeared the last hundred and fifty years. The place given to Private Confession in agenda, service books, and Luther's Small Catechism, strongly indicates that the practice has never died out.

The purpose of Part III is to present statistics and facts to prevent invalid assumptions concerning contemporary opinion and practice of Private Confession among Lutherans in America.

PART THREE

A SURVEY OF PRACTICE AND OPINION
IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN LUTHERANISM

INTRODUCTION TO THE SURVEY

(1) The purpose of the first two parts of this study has been to present the Lutheran view of Private Confession and evidence of Private Confession in the history of American Lutheranism. Part I stated the strong basis Private Confession has in Lutheranism. Part II cited incidents of practice and opinion, but could establish few facts. It was found that Private Confession was rarely discussed in American church historical writings, consequently mere indications of its place and importance could be gained. However, there can never be a sudden and complete neglect of a particular doctrine or practice in the Church. If the conclusions from the two first parts of the study are correct, one may test the results by a study of practice and opinion in contemporary church life. Considering the present situation among Lutherans in the United States, one might ask to what extent is Private Confession practiced, what the current opinion of Private Confession is, how much instruction is given about Private Confession, how the practices differ from one body to another, and how tradition, background, location and other factors influence this practice. If this and related information could be obtained, historical indications would be confirmed or denied. Furthermore, we could present the facts concerning contemporary practice and opinion of Private Confession, and, if there is a desire for revival of Private Confession, where stress has to be placed to meet such a desire. The final part of this study is designed to give answers to some of these problems.

(2) Based on the findings presented in the doctrinal and historical sections, the theory behind the present survey and discussion is that Private Confession still is practiced in Lutheranism and that the practice is related to certain congregational and ministerial factors. One would not expect to find it used by all pastors, and at best it would not be practiced often. Concerning various forms of Private Confession, the historical study indicated that Private Confession in the twentieth century usually occurs in connection with the order for Communion of the Sick. However, a few incidents of Private Confession are conducted in connection with announcement for Holy Communion and as a sole means in pastoral care.

(3) From this theory, a general hypothesis and sub-hypotheses were developed. The hypothesis was formulated: "The degree to which Private Confession is practiced in American Lutheranism is related to denominational, congregational and ministerial factors."

The sub-hypotheses were:

I. Denominational factors.
   1. Denominational affiliation.

II. Congregational factors.
   1. The congregation's location and size.
   2. The degree of assimilation to American culture.
   3. Forms of worship services used by the congregation.
   4. Frequency of instruction about Private Confession in different congregational situations.

III. Ministerial factors.
   1. The pastor's background.
   2. The pastor's education.
   3. The pastor's theological position.
   4. The pastor's professional experience.
   5. The pastor's role definition.
   6. The pastor's self-evaluation about Private Confession.

7. The pastor's evaluation of instruction in the different congregational situations.
8. The pastor's evaluation of situations for hearing of Private Confession.
9. The pastor's attitude toward psychology.

There may be other congregational and ministerial factors which possibly influence the practice of Private Confession, but those stated above are considered the most important ones.

(4) The variables derived from the sub-hypotheses were grouped as follows:

Dependent variable:
The extent to which Private Confession is practiced in American Lutheranism.

Control variable:
The extent to which other forms of confession are practiced.

Independent variables:

1. Denominational affiliation.
2. The congregation's location and size.
3. The congregation's degree of assimilation in American culture.
4. Forms of worship services used by the congregation.
5. Instruction about Private Confession in different congregational situations.
6. The pastor's background.
7. The pastor's education.
8. The pastor's theological position.
9. The pastor's professional experience.
10. The pastor's role definition.
11. The pastor's self-evaluation about Private Confession.
12. The pastor's evaluation of instruction about Private Confession in different congregational situations.
13. The pastor's evaluation of situations for hearing of Private Confession.
14. The pastor's personal practice of Private Confession.
15. The pastor's attitude toward psychology.

(5) Based on variables a first draft of the questionnaire was written[1] and presented by interview to twelve Lutheran

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[1] Appendix II shows which questions in the final questionnaire are related to the different variables.

pastors in Montreal, Canada, in March of 1960. Montreal was selected partly because after living a year in the city the author was personally acquainted with some of the pastors, but mainly because the Lutheran churches in Montreal have different backgrounds, keep traditions and languages of the "mother church" to a large extent, and are affiliated with several church bodies in the United States. These interviews confirmed the hypothesis that Private Confession was practiced to a certain degree and that the pastors were interested in the subject. A more complete edition of the questionnaire was first discussed in a postgraduate study group in Princeton; second the questionnaire was used in interviewing a number of Lutheran pastors in New Jersey; and third representatives from the National Lutheran Council[1] and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod[2] made suggestions. In this process the questionnaire was rewritten several times until in final form it contained fifty-two questions.[3]

(6) It was decided that the universe of study should be Lutheran parish pastors from either of the two larger Lutheran groups in the United States, the Synodical Conference and the National Lutheran Council.[4] Laymen, institutional chaplains,

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[1] Especially helpful was Dr. Walter Kloetzli of the National Lutheran Council in Chicago.

[2] Valuable suggestions were given by the Reverend Norman Temme, assistant to Dr. Oswald C. J. Hoffmann of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in New York City.

[3] Appendix III.

[4] These pastors represent more than 99% of all Lutheran parish pastors in the United States.

and pastors in teaching and administration were omitted not because they would have nothing to contribute, but because the survey had to be limited.

(7) For obtaining the data, a sampling of parish pastors was taken from the 1961 yearbooks and official rosters of the different church bodies. Every twentieth pastor[1] was selected from bodies having more than one hundred active ministers in parishes, thus the sampling was 5%. From the smaller bodies having less than a hundred pastors,[2] the sampling was 20% in order to obtain an adequate sampling.[3]

Sponsored by the National Lutheran Council,[4] recommended by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod,[5] permitted by the Wisconsin Synod,[6] and financed by a grant from the Lutheran Brotherhood, the questionnaire was mailed to 699 parish pastors all over the United States in July 1961. Enclosed with the questionnaire was a letter from the pastor's church group, a letter from the author,[1] and a self-addressed, stamped envelope. A "follow-up" letter was sent a few weeks later,[2] containing another copy of the questionnaire and an envelope.

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[1] The yearbooks were arranged after ballotting, and a number drawn to select the first pastor. The number being 12 means that the questionnaire was mailed to parish pastors listed no. 12, 32, 52, etc., in the first yearbook; having seven names left, no. 13, 33, etc., was selected from the next roster, etc. As for the smaller church bodies, pastors listed as no. 5, 10, and 15 between the "twentieth pastors," received the questionnaire.

[2] These bodies are: The Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (Slovak); National Evangelical Lutheran Church (Finnish); Evangelical Lutheran Synod (Norwegian); American Evangelical Lutheran Church; Suomi Synod.

[3] The 1961 rosters listed 12,906 parish pastors in the United States. Thus the whole sample was 5.42%.

[4] Cf. Appendix IV.

[5] Cf. Appendix V.

[6] Cf. Appendix VI.

The response was very good. As seen in Table 1, two out of three pastors answered the questions. The percentage is nearly the same for the two groups, and the three largest bodies are within a range of six percent. A response of 66.7% is considered most satisfactory using the method of mailed

Table 1

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Church group and church body	Qu. mailed	Qu. received	Percent
A. National Lutheran Council			
The Am. Lutheran Church. . .	176	113	64.2
Am. Ev. Lutheran Church. . .	10	5	50.0
Augustana Ev. Luth. Ch.. . .	51	38	74.5
Suomi Synod	16	8	50.0
United Luth. Ch. in America.	162	114	70.4
Lutheran Free Church	9	7	77.8
Sub-total	424	285	67.2
B. Ev. Luth. Synodical Conf.			
Luth. Church-Mo. Synod . . .	217	149	68.7
Synod of Ev. Luth. Ch. (Slov.)	10	8	80.0
Nat. Ev. Luth. Church (Finn.)	6	4	66.7
Wisconsin Ev. Luth. Church .	33	15	45.5
Ev. Luth. Synod (Norwegian).	9	5	55.6
Sub-total	275	181	65.8
TOTAL groups A & B.	699	466	66.7

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[1] Cf. Appendix VII.

[2] Appendix VIII.

questionnaire, and this fact alone indicates a widespread interest in Private Confession among Lutheran parish pastors.

(8) Data obtained in the survey will be presented in the next three chapters. The dependent variable, i.e., the actual practice of Private Confession is stated and discussed in Chapter Six. First the practice of all forms of Private Confession is shown in the different church bodies, in the two groups, and as a total. Further, the information gained is broken down into frequency groups, thus showing how many pastors have an annual practice of Private Confession one to five times, six to ten times, etc. Secondly the different forms of Private Confession, are presented in a similar way, i.e., how often Private Confession is practiced in connection with Communion of the Sick, announcement of Holy Communion, or as a special pastoral act.

Chapters Seven and Eight respectively treat congregational and ministerial factors which assumingly might influence the practice of Private Confession. The findings apply to the pastors who practice Private Confession and to those who do not. Here an important consideration and decision was made: One of the practiced forms of Private Confession is quite "ritualistic," namely Private Confession in connection with Communion of the Sick. This does not mean the practice is necessarily mechanical. Depending on the individual pastor and parishioner, the confession of sins can be very real even if a written form is followed. However, according to the service book and agenda, when visiting a sick person, the pastor is expected to conduct the Lord's Supper in this way. By the same token, the pastor's concern for Private Confession in the care of souls is *not* necessarily expressed by his having conducted Private Confession with a certain frequency as part of the written order for Communion of the Sick. He may well regard Private Confession as a substitute for Public Confession recited in church every Sunday, particularly in preparation for Holy Communion.

Granting that this consideration is valid, we find that pastors with a concern for the value of Private Confession as a means in the care of souls, are mainly those trying to use this means in connection with announcement for Holy Communion and as a special pastoral act. In neither case are the pastors expected to use Private Confession by any church order. Whenever he does, the pastor shows that he is open to the value of Private Confession as well as to its practice. Consequently, it seems justifiable to distinguish between the pastors using Private Confession in connection with announcement for Holy Communion and/or as a special pastoral act, and those not practicing Private Confession in these connections. On this basis, the following operational definition is offered: *For statistical testing, we will regard the pastors who practice Private Confession in connection with announcement for Holy Communion and/or as a special pastoral act, as "Pastors Practicing Private Confession (P)"; those pastors not doing so, will be regarded as "Pastors Not Practicing Private Confession (NP)"; even if some of them might have used it occasionally in connection with the ritual of Communion of the Sick.*

One may agree or disagree with the operational definition, but this is the research basis on which tests of statistical significance have taken place.[1]

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[1] As a measure of the dependent variables (presented in Chapter VI) the cases were divided into two groups: those practicing Private Confession and those not practicing as determined by answers to questions 6 and 7 of the questionnaire (Table 6).

For those independent variables which were answered by checking a response category, the frequencies were tallied according to these categories. When this type of independent variable was compared with the dependent variables, a "K x 2" table (two groups of K categories) resulted with the data entered in the form of frequencies in each of the cells (f_o). The statistical test applied to this situation is the "Chi-square" test. The formula is:

$$\chi^2 = S\left[\frac{(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e}\right]$$

S is the sum for all cells. f_o the observed frequencies in the cells. f_e is the expected frequency if chance alone were operating. Thus the larger the value of "Chi-square" the more departure there is from chance. The obtained χ^2 (Chi-square) value is compared with values found in the tables of the χ^2 distribution. From these tables a probability value is obtained. Probabilities of .05 or less are taken to be significant since they indicate that this large a χ^2 value would be obtained by chance alone only five or less times in one hundred repetitions of the test with different samples of cases.

For those independent variables which were answered on a ten point scale, the data were the actual distributions of these scale values. This type of independent variable was compared with the dependent variables by testing the difference between the means obtained for the practicing and non-practicing groups on the independent variable. The statistical test applied was the "t-test":

$$t = \frac{\text{Mean}_P - \text{Mean}_{NP}}{\sqrt{\frac{N_P + N_{NP}}{N_P\,N_{NP}}\;\frac{(N_P - 1)\,\text{Variance}_P + (N_{NP} - 1)\,\text{Variance}_{NP}}{(N_P + N_{NP} - 2)}}}$$

N_P and N_{NP} are the number of cases in the practicing and not-practicing groups.

This test compares the difference between the means of the two groups while taking into account the amount of variation (Variance) within each group. Thus a large t-value shows a difference between means which is still large even when compared to the variation due to individual differences within the groups. This t-value is compared to values found on the tables of the t-distribution and a probability value is obtained. As with the χ^2 test a probability value of .05 or less is considered to indicate a significant difference between the groups.

CHAPTER VI

PRESENT PRACTICE OF PRIVATE CONFESSION

In the questionnaire mailed to the Lutheran pastors, the definition of the term Private Confession was given as "confession of sins by one man to another (usually the pastor) followed by the other's declared absolution."[1] Qu. 4 asked how many times the pastor had heard Private Confession during the last year. Qu. 5, 6, and 7 considered different situations where Private Confession mentioned in Qu. 4 had taken place. Thus the sum of Qu. 5, 6, and 7 should be the same as the answer to Qu. 4. The findings presented in this chapter will follow the same order as the questions.[2]

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[1] Appendix III.

[2] In all tables the following abbreviations will be used:

A. NLC -National Lutheran Council
ALC -The American Lutheran Church
AELC -American Evangelical Lutheran Church
Aug. -Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church (Augustana Synod)
Suo. -Suomi Synod (Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church)
ULCA -United Lutheran Church in America
Free -Lutheran Free Church

B. Syn.C.-Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America
Mis. -The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
Slo. -The Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (Slovak Synod)
NELC -National Evangelical Lutheran Church (Finnish Synod)
Wis. -Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Church (Wisconsin Synod)
ELS -Evangelical Lutheran Synod (Norwegian Synod)

Pas. -Pastors
Pr.Con. -Private Confession(s)
N.A. -Not answered

A. Practice of Private Confession as a Whole.

Recalling the theory based on Parts One and Two of this study, Private Confession was still expected to be practiced to a certain extent. Table 2-A gives the answer.

Table 2-A

ANNUAL PRACTICE OF PRIVATE CONFESSION IN DIFFERENT LUTHERAN CHURCH BODIES, IN THE TWO GROUPS, AND IN TOTAL

Group:	A.NLC.						Sub-total
Body :	ALC	AELC	Aug.	Suo.	ULCA	Free	
Pastors:	113	4	33	8	113	6	277
Pr.Con.:	1657	9	307	142	3821	11	5974
Mean :	14.7	2.2	9.3	17.8	33.8	1.8	21.5

Group:	B.Syn.C.					Sub-total	GRAND TOTAL
Body :	Mis.	Slo.	NELC	Wis.	ELS		
Pastors:	142	8	4	14	5	173	450
Pr.Con.:	4922	144	77	339	144	5626	11595
Mean :	34.8	18.0	19.2	24.2	28.8	32.6	25.8

This This table shows that Private Confession is still used to quite a large extent in the United States. Admittedly the frequency is larger than expected. Comparing the two groups, the Synodical Conference pastors have a more frequent practice than the National Lutheran Council pastors, more than thirty-two cases as compared to twenty-one. These numbers confirm an earlier assumption that Private Confession is more frequently used by conservative church bodies; those having both "Confession" and The Office of the Keys" included in the official edition of Luther's Small Catechism. The large mean within the United Lutheran Church may appear striking when compared to the other bodies. The United Lutheran Church is not commonly regarded as belonging to the conservative wing of Lutheranism. However, this was expected because of the special order of Private Confession introduced into this church body at the turn of the century.

The average practice of twenty-five cases of Private Confession a year covers a wide range of difference in frequency. Some pastors do not practice Private Confession, while others are very active. Including the pastors not having answered the question, the frequency of practice among the pastors is as follows:

Table 2-B

FREQUENCY OF ANNUAL PRACTICE OF PRIVATE CONFESSION AMONG LUTHERAN PASTORS

Group:	A.NLC.						
Body :	ALC Pas.	AELC Pas.	Aug. Pas.	Suo. Pas.	ULCA Pas.	Free Pas.	Sub-total Pas.
Frequ.							
0 :	30	2	10	2	25	3	72
1-5 :	31	2	9	1	19	3	65
6-10 :	10	-	5	1	14	-	30
11-20 :	15	-	4	1	6	-	26
21-30 :	7	-	1	2	10	-	20
31-40 :	8	-	3	-	9	-	20
41-50 :	4	-	-	-	7	-	11
51-60 :	2	-	1	-	3	-	6
61-70 :	2	-	-	1	1	-	4
71-80 :	2	-	-	-	6	-	8
81-90 :	1	-	-	-	3	-	4
91-100 :	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
over 100:	1	-	-	-	10	-	11
N.A. :	-	1	5	-	1	1	8
Pastors :	113	5	38	8	114	7	285

Group B continued on next page.

Group: Body : Frequ.	B.Syn.C. Mis. Pas.	Slo. Pas.	NELC Pas.	Wis. Pas.	ELS Pas.	Sub-total Pas.	GRAND TOTAL Pas.
0 :	18	1	-	1	1	21	93
1-5 :	33	2	2	4	1	42	107
6-10 :	20	2	-	3	1	26	56
11-20 :	19	-	1	1	1	22	48
21-30 :	17	-	-	1	1	18	38
31-40 :	5	1	-	1	-	7	27
41-50 :	6	2	-	-	-	8	19
51-60 :	7	-	1	1	-	9	15
61-70 :	4	-	-	-	-	4	8
71-80 :	4	-	-	-	-	4	12
81-90 :	2	-	-	1	-	3	7
91-100 :	1	-	-	-	-	1	1
over 100:	6	-	-	1	1	8	19
N.A. :	7	-	-	1	-	8	16
Pastors :	149	8	4	15	5	181	466

Thus, about forty-three percent of the pastors practicing Private Confession more than ten times a year; about thirty-six percent practice it between one and ten times; and only about twenty-one percent never use it.

B. Private Confession in Connection with Communion of the Sick.

All Lutheran church bodies have a special ritual for Communion of the Sick. Preceding Holy Communion, confession and absolution are usually conducted. The confession of sins made by the sick person in this connection is a Private Confession in that it takes place between the sick person and the pastor, and is followed by the pastor's declared absolution. In all instances written confessions are recited, but there is often opportunity given for confession of personal sins. The extent to which this opportunity is used is not known. The pastors were only asked to state how many of the Private Confessions stated above (Tables 2-A and 2-B) took place in connection with Communion of the Sick.

Table 3-A

ANNUAL PRACTICE OF PRIVATE CONFESSION IN CONNECTION WITH COMMUNION OF THE SICK

Group: A.NLC. Body : ALC		AELC	Aug.	Suo.	ULCA	Free	Sub-total
Pastors:	111	4	33	7	113	6	274
Pr.Con.:	1398	5	241	123	3304	9	5080
Mean :	12.6	1.2	7.3	17.6	29.2	1.5	18.5

Group: B.Syn.C. Body : Mis.		Slo.	NELC	Wis.	ELS	Sub-total	GRAND TOTAL
Pastors:	141	8	4	14	5	172	446
Pr.Con.:	3756	86	71	314	109	4336	9416
Mean :	26.6	10.8	17.8	22.4	21.8	25.2	21.1

Compared with Table 2-A, Private Confession in connection with Communion of the Sick accounts for four out of five Private Confessions practiced in Lutheranism at the present time. The finding confirms the assumption made from the examination of worship material that Private Confession in this form is more common than the other two forms. The National Lutheran Council pastors conducted eighty-five percent of the Private Confessions in Communion of the Sick, while the Synodical Conference pastors seventy-seven percent. There is a great range of difference among the smaller bodies. However, the number of pastors participating in these bodies is too small to permit us to state any percentage as representative for those churches.[1] There is a certain similarity among larger bodies, the Missouri Synod practicing Private Confession in connection with Communion of the Sick in seventy-six percent of all cases; the Augustana Synod in seventy-nine percent; the American Lutheran Church in eighty-four; and the United Lutheran Church in eighty-six percent of the cases.

Thus we see that, to a great extent, Private Confession in contemporary American Lutheranism takes place in connection with Communion of the Sick. How frequently the different pastors practice Private Confession in this form, is seen in the following table:

Table 3-B

FREQUENCY OF ANNUAL PRACTICE OF PRIVATE CONFESSION IN CONNECTION WITH COMMUNION OF THE SICK

Group:	A.NLC.						Sub-
Body :	ALC Pas.	AELC Pas.	Aug. Pas.	Suo. Pas.	ULCA Pas.	Free Pas.	total Pas.
Frequ.							
0 :	39	3	16	1	35	3	97
1-5 :	26	1	5	2	15	3	52
6-10 :	8	-	5	-	11	-	24
11-20 :	15	-	3	3	13	-	34
21-30 :	9	-	2	-	5	-	16
31-40 :	5	-	1	-	7	-	13
41-50 :	2	-	1	-	7	-	10
over 50:	7	-	-	1	20	-	28
N. A. :	2	1	5	1	1	1	11
Pastors:	113	5	38	8	114	7	285

(Continued on next page)

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[1] These church bodies are still presented in many tables because the information is of interest in connection with the group to which they belong.

Group:	B.Syn.C.						
Body :	Mis. Pas.	Slo. Pas.	NELC Pas.	Wis. Pas.	ELS Pas.	Sub-total Pas.	GRAND TOTAL Pas.
Frequ.							
0 :	41	1	-	4	1	47	144
1-5 :	20	4	2	3	3	32	84
6-10 :	17	-	-	1	-	18	42
11-20 :	18	1	1	2	-	22	56
21-30 :	17	1	-	1	-	19	35
31-40 :	1	1	-	-	-	2	15
41-50 :	9	-	1	-	-	10	20
over 50:	18	-	-	3	1	22	50
N.A. :	8	-	-	1	-	9	20
Pastors:	149	8	4	15	5	181	466

According to this table, approximately one out of three pastors never conduct Private Confession in connection with Communion of the Sick. The reason for this rather high percentage may be that first, Communion to the sick is rarely administered (for example in new, suburban communities), second, that Holy Communion in such cases is given without previous confession and absolution, and third, in Communion of the Sick many pastors do not regard the ritual for confession and absolution as Private Confession.

C. Private Confession in Connection with Announcement for Holy Communion.

This form of Private Confession was commonly used in Lutheranism during the first centuries.[1] Usually the announcement before Holy Communion was an examination in Christianity, but counseling on problems and confession of sins may well have taken place on those occasions. In the latter cases, the term Private Confession was correct.

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[1] Cf. supra, pp. 120-123; 130-138.

The churches never accepted a special ritual for Private Confession in connection with announcement for Holy Communion. However, the tradition of announcing their intention to participate in Holy Communion is still alive in some congregations. As in earlier days, people see the pastor several days before Communion Sunday. Because this occasion gives an opportunity not only to counsel with the pastor, but also to confess and be absolved of sins, the ministers were asked how often Private Confession took place under such circumstances.

Table 4-A

ANNUAL PRACTICE OF PRIVATE CONFESSION IN CONNECTION WITH ANNOUNCEMENT FOR HOLY COMMUNION

Group: Body :	A.NLC. ALC	AELC	Aug.	Suo.	ULCA	Free	Sub-total
Pastors:	108	4	32	7	111	6	268
Pr.Con.:	40	-	-	-	312	-	352
Mean :	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.8	0.0	1.3

Group: Body :	B.Syn.C. Mis.	Slo.	NELC	Wis.	ELS	Sub-total	GRAND TOTAL
Pastors:	144	8	3	13	5	173	441
Pr.Con.:	692	48	-	6	9	755	1107
Mean :	4.8	6.0	0.0	0.5	1.8	4.4	2.5

The frequency is not large in any body. Among the National Lutheran Council pastors the United Lutheran Church is highest. The Missouri and the Slovak Synods are far ahead of any other. Nevertheless these small numbers are important. The pastors practicing this form of Private Confession may do so by reason of tradition, but for all of them Private Confession has remained a means of the care of souls. The following table shows the number of pastors using Private Confession in connection with announcement, and also the frequency of use:

Table 4-B

FREQUENCY OF ANNUAL PRACTICE OF PRIVATE CONFESSION IN CONNECTION WITH ANNOUNCEMENT FOR HOLY COMMUNION

Group: Body :	A.NLC. ALC Pas.	AELC Pas.	Aug. Pas.	Suo. Pas.	ULCA Pas.	Free Pas.	Sub-total Pas.
Frequ.							
0 :	101	4	32	7	101	6	251
1-5 :	5	-	-	-	1	-	6
6-10 :	1	-	-	-	3	-	4
over 10:	1	-	-	-	6	-	7
N.A. :	5	1	6	1	3	1	17
Pastors:	113	5	38	8	114	7	285

Group: Body :	B.Syn.C. Mis. Pas.	Slo. Pas.	NELC Pas.	Wis. Pas.	ELS Pas.	Sub-total Pas.	GRAND TOTAL Pas.
Frequ.							
0 :	109	3	3	9	4	128	379
1-5 :	23	3	-	4	-	30	36
6-10 :	6	-	-	-	1	7	11
over 10:	6	2	-	-	-	8	15
N.A. :	5	-	1	2	-	8	25
Pastors:	149	8	4	15	5	181	466

From the table can be seen that only a small number of ministers use Private Confession in connection with announcement for Holy Communion. The average of all pastors is about fourteen percent; six percent of the pastors in the National Lutheran Council follow this practice; and twenty-six percent of the pastors from the Synodical Conference.

D. Private Confession as a Special Pastoral Act.

Luther's original form of Private Confession was neither in connection with visitation of sick persons nor with announcement for Holy Communion. It was solely an act in the service of pastoral care.[1] When a parishioner was in trouble, he might confess his sins, get absolution, and thus be comforted. The form of Private Confession stated by Luther in his Small Catechism has the same goal. Nothing is said about Holy Communion, but confession and absolution are in themselves important in a Christian's life. To discover whether this practice still exists, the pastors were asked how many of the Private Confessions were not followed by Holy Communion, either privately or publicly.

Table 5-A

ANNUAL PRACTICE OF PRIVATE CONFESSION AS A SPECIAL PASTORAL ACT

Group:	A.NLC.						
Body :	ALC	AELC	Aug.	Suo.	ULCA	Free	Sub-total
Pastors:	101	4	30	7	112	5	259
Pr.Con.:	242	4	67	19	225	2	559
Mean :	2.4	1.0	2.2	2.7	2.0	0.4	2.2

Group:	B.Syn.C.						
Body :	Mis.	Slo.	NELC	Wis.	ELS	Sub-total	GRAND TOTAL
Pastors:	142	7	4	12	5	170	429
Pr.Con.:	490	10	6	19	26	551	1110
Mean :	3.4	1.4	1.5	1.6	5.2	3.2	2.6

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[1] Cf. supra, Chapter III.

The mean is almost exactly like the one discussed in Tables 4-A and B, namely 2.6. However, like the situations listed above, only a certain number of pastors participate in this practice. The following table shows how many, and also the frequency.

Table 5-B

FREQUENCY OF ANNUAL PRACTICE OF PRIVATE CONFESSION AS A SPECIAL ACT

Group: Body :	A.NLC. ALC Pas.	AELC Pas.	Aug. Pas.	Suo. Pas.	ULCA Pas.	Free Pas.	Sub-total Pas.
Frequ.							
0 :	56	3	14	4	77	4	158
1-5 :	33	1	13	2	21	1	71
6-10 :	7	-	2	1	8	-	18
over 10:	5	-	1	-	6	-	12
N.A. :	12	1	8	1	2	2	26
Pastors:	113	5	38	8	114	7	285

Group: Body :	B.Syn.C. Mis. Pas.	Slo. Pas.	NELC Pas.	Wis. Pas.	ELS Pas.	Sub-total Pas.	GRAND TOTAL Pas.
Frequ.							
0 :	71	4	-	6	2	83	241
1-5 :	51	3	4	5	2	65	136
6-10 :	8	-	-	1	-	9	27
over 10:	12	-	-	-	1	13	25
N.A. :	7	1	-	3	-	11	37
Pastors:	149	8	4	15	5	181	466

Thus the numbers of pastors practicing Private Confession as a special pastoral act is much larger than those practicing Private Confession in connection with announcement for Holy Communion (188 compared to 62). Thirty-nine percent of all National Lutheran Council pastors use the means of Private Confession as a special act; fifty-one percent of the Synodical Conference pastors use it; and the average for all pastors is about forty-four percent.

Based on the findings presented in this chapter, we may conclude that the practice of Private Confession in its different forms is not forgotten in the United States. The frequency of Private Confession in connection with Communion of the Sick, **is not small.** On the other hand, a considerable percentage of the pastors do use the means of Private Confession in pastoral care. This fact does not prove without doubt that Private Confession was continually practiced in earlier generations. However, if one accepts a certain continuity of doctrine and practice in the Church, it may be suggested that the findings of contemporary practice together with the historical indications seemingly confirm that there has always been some practice of Private Confession in many Lutheran congregations. Thus some practice of Private Confession probably existed in wide sections of earlier American Lutheranism in spite of meager historical support.

The operational definition offered above stated that for statistical testing of independent variables, the pastors who practice Private Confession in connection with announcement for Holy Communion and/or as a special pastoral act would be regarded as "Pastors Practicing Private Confession (P)," while the other pastors would be regarded as "Pastors Not Practicing Private Confession (NP)." Table 6 presents the numbers and percentages of these two groups of pastors.

Table 6

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF PASTORS' PRACTICE OF PRIVATE CONFESSION IN CONNECTION WITH ANNOUNCEMENT FOR HOLY COMMUNION AND/OR AS A SPECIAL PASTORAL ACT

		Number Pastors pract.	Percent Pastors pract.	Number Pastors not pract.[1]	Percent Pastors not pract.	GRAND TOTAL
Group:	A.NLC.					
Body :	ALC	45	40	68	60	113
	AELC	1	20	4	80	5
	Aug.	16	42	22	58	38
	Suo.	3	38	5	62	8
	ULCA	41	36	73	64	114
	Free	1	14	6	86	7
Sub-total		107	38	178	62	285
Group:	B.Syn.C.					
Body :	Mis.	82	55	67	45	149
	Slo.	6	75	2	25	8
	NELC	4	100	0	0	4
	Wis.	7	47	8	53	15
	ELS	3	60	2	40	5
Sub-total		102	56	79	44	181
GRAND TOTAL		209	45	257	55	466

Forty-five percent of the pastors may be considered as practicing, while fifty-five percent as not practicing. Two hundred nine pastors used Private Confession as a means in pastoral care while two hundred fifty-seven did not. Most of the factors discussed in the next two chapters will apply to these two groups of pastors.

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[1] In the percentages and numbers of pastors not practicing Private Confession in this table those pastors are included who have not answered one or both questions. This is done on the assumption that the pastors would have stated a number of cases if they had practiced Private Confession at all in either form.

CHAPTER VII

CONGREGATIONAL FACTORS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE PRACTICE OF PRIVATE CONFESSION

The Lutheran parishes in the United States extend over the entire country. They are located in towns and cities, in rural and urban areas. Some of them are newly established, others are old. Most parishes have a certain ethnic background. There are still congregations having services in a language other than English. A variety of practices are found in the frequency of Holy Communion services and "informal" services; and different stress is placed upon instruction in a congregational setting. Matters like these were assumed to influence the practice of Private Confession, and the following discussion presents some of the findings of this research. Quite a few of them are of interest in themselves from a purely descriptive point of view. As for the possible influence on the practice of Private Confession most findings have been subjected to statistical treatment.

A. The Congregation's Location and Size.

Generally, Lutherans in central United States are regarded as being more conservative than Lutherans in other parts. Based on the theory that pastors working in conservative congregations more likely use Private Confession than in less conservative settings, the region of the United States in which the congregations are located should be of some significance regarding the practice of Private Confession. Furthermore, the location in town, city, or suburban rural was thought to have some influence upon its practice. Our theory in this respect is not clear. On the one hand, rural congregations are more apt to maintain traditions, and if Private Confession was practiced in earlier days, one could expect this to show up in the findings. On the other hand, there may be a more common practice of pastoral counseling in a city or suburban setting, and this might have been reflected on the practice. Finally the size of a congregation was assumed to have some bearing on the practice of Private Confession. In a larger congregation the pastor probably will have more requests for counseling than in a smaller parish. Assuming a relationship of counseling to Private Confession, the hypothesis therefore is that Private Confession was practiced more likely by pastors in larger congregations than in small ones.

1. Region.

The pastors answering the questionnaire, had parishes in forty-six different states. First arranged in nine groups after the official United States census, and then in five groups to form comparable units, the following table shows the difference between practice of Private Confession in five regions.

Table 7

NUMBER OF PASTORS PRACTICING AND NOT PRACTICING PRIVATE CONFESSION IN DIFFERENT REGIONS OF THE UNITED STATES

Region	P	NP	Total
East	31	55	86
South	30	33	63
East North-Central	65	59	124
West North-Central	63	79	142
West	18	28	46
TOTAL	207	254	461

In one of the regions, East North-Central, there are more pastors practicing Private Confession than not. However, the difference between proportions for the regions are of no statistical significance.

2. Rural, Town, City, or Suburban Location.

Table 8

NUMBER OF PASTORS PRACTICING AND NOT PRACTICING PRIVATE CONFESSION IN DIFFERENT LOCATIONS

Location	P	NP	Total
Rural	65	87	152
Town	58	81	139
City	54	58	112
Suburb	29	28	57
TOTAL	206	254	460

In our sample there is one more pastor practicing Private Confession in suburban congregations than not, but the proportions for the different locations are so nearly equal that the statistical conclusion is that the location of a parish is of no significance.

3. Size of Congregation.

The remarks made for location are valid as far as the size of the congregation is concerned. One might perhaps have expected that some differences could be seen, but the numbers are surprisingly close. Having taken the size of all parishes reported by the pastors and divided them into four groups, the finding is as follows:

Table 9

NUMBER OF PASTORS PRACTICING AND NOT PRACTICING PRIVATE CONFESSION IN CONGREGATIONS OF DIFFERENT SIZES

Size	P.	NP.	Total
Less than 200 members	51	64	115
201-316 members	53	61	114
317-529 members	51	62	113
more than 530 members	52	62	114
TOTAL	207	249	456

Thus the conclusion is that, according to our sample, a congregation's location and size do not influence the practice of Private Confession. Here the hypothesis was wrong. There may be several explanations, the most likely of which seems to be that the pastor's personal influence in a congregation is stronger than influences of location and size. During his lifetime, a Lutheran pastor often works in different regions or locations, thus bringing an influence on the practice or non-practice of Private Confession which seemingly is independent on region, location, and size.

B. The Congregation's Degree of Assimilation in American Culture.

Traditions and customs apparently influence many Lutheran congregations. In parishes established in older times, the members usually had one ethnic background, being, for example, Swedes or Germans. For several generations services in the "mother tongue" were conducted in such congregations. Only gradually did English replace the other languages, and the last twenty-five years have shown a strong tendency in using nothing but English in American Lutheran churches. When parishes are established today, the members still have different ethnic backgrounds, but most of them have been Americans for several generations. Still tradition and the "mother tongue" are kept in a number of congregations. Believing that such factors might be of some importance in the use of Private Confession, the pastors were asked to give some information about their parish.

1. Age of Congregation.

Dividing the parishes into four similar sized groups, the number of pastors practicing and not practicing Private Confession in these groups can be seen from the table on page 280 (Table 10). If we compare the oldest congregations with the recently established ones, there is a larger proportion of pastors practicing Private Confession in the younger parishes than in the older ones. Again, the difference is not large

Table 10

NUMBER OF PASTORS PRACTICING AND NOT PRACTICING PRIVATE CONFESSION IN CONGREGATIONS OF DIFFERENT AGE

Period of establishment of parish	P.	NP.	Total
Before 1882	45	68	113
Between 1883-1901	52	64	116
Between 1902-1936	49	62	111
After 1937	58	55	113
TOTAL	204	249	453

enough to be statistically significant. However, if the parishes were divided into only two groups, those established in the last century and those established in our century, a statistical test would show that there is a trend toward significance.[1] There seems to be a strong indication that Private Confession is more frequently used in younger congregations than in older ones though the evidence does not justify any definite conclusions. If this observation is valid, it further suggests that traditions have not carried along the practice of Private Confession as a means in pastoral care. In newer parishes, bound by few traditional ties, the practice has more easily been introduced.

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[1] There are 216 pastors working in "older" congregations; 87 are practicing Private Confession (P); 129 are not (NP). In "younger" congregations 237 pastors are working; 117 are practicing Private Confession (P); 120 are not (NP).

A χ^2 test on this basis shows $p < .10$ which is a tendency toward statistical significance. The same result is obtained if a test is made only based on the oldest and youngest groups in Table 10.

2. Ethnic Background.

The members of Lutheran congregations in the United States have a great variety of ethnic background, even if most congregations have members of either German and/or Scandinavian[1] origin. Many groups would have been much too small, if all combinations of ethnic groups in parishes would have been tested, to establish whether ethnic background has any bearing on the practice of Private Confession.[2] Four larger groups had to be arranged, congregations with members of German, of Scandinavian, of German and Scandinavian, and of other background.

Table 11

NUMBER OF PASTORS PRACTICING AND NOT PRACTICING PRIVATE CONFESSION IN CONGREGATIONS OF DIFFERENT ETHNIC BACKGROUND

Ethnic background	P	NP	Total
German	74	86	160
Scandinavian	22	35	57
German-Scandinavian	85	107	192
Other	28	29	57
TOTAL	209	257	466

No significant differences between the proportions practicing and not practicing can be seen in the group, which is also confirmed by the statistical test. Still another question and test confirmed the finding in Table 11: The pastors were asked to circle the ethnic background which represented more than fifty percent of the members in their congregations. In 253 parishes with a majority of a particular ethnic background, pastors practicing Private Confession(P) were found in 108; not practicing (NP) in 145. In 213 congregations not having more than half of the members of one specific background, pastors practicing Private Confession(P) were found in 101; not practicing (NP) in 112 congregations.

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[1] By Scandinavian is meant Danish, Finnish, Swedish, or Norwegian ethnic background.

[2] The coding gave forty-six combinations.

Without denying that a certain ethnic background, for example from the Baltic States, may have an influence on the practice of Private Confession, the general conclusion still must be that ethnic background is of no significance.[1] If ethnic background and practice of Private Confession were once related, contemporary Lutheran congregations are assimilated in American culture to an extent which has brought the relationship to an end.

C. Forms of Worship Services in the Congregation.

Forms of worship services show much variety in American Lutheran churches. This can easily be seen by considering the many possibilities of variations permitted in the service books in use at present.[1] A similar variety appears in the frequency of some forms of services, mainly the public confession, the Holy Communion, and the so-called "Informal" or "Music Services." It was thought that the frequency of such services might have some relation to the practice of Private Confession, and the following information was obtained[2]:

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[1] Since it was believed that ethnic background might have had an influence on the practice of Private Confession, the pastors were also asked to give additional information, namely Qu. 50,51,and 52 in Appendix III.

116 pastors stated that more than five percent of their parishioners were born outside the United States, the average being 18.8 percent; 315 pastors had congregations with less than five percent "foreign born."

401 pastors had services only in English, while 53 had services in another language. Twenty-five of the latter pastors had service once a week in the non-English language; the rest of them ranged from a service every second week to once a year.

None of this information seemed to have any bearing upon the practice of Private Confession.

1. Holy Communion Services.

Table 12-A

ANNUAL FREQUENCY OF HOLY COMMUNION SERVICES IN DIFFERENT BODIES AND GROUPS

Group: Body :	A.NLC. ALC	AELC	Aug.	Suo.	ULCA	Free	Sub-total
Pastors:	112	5	37	8	112	6	280
H.Cs. :	1710	62	621	142	1922	234	4691
Mean :	15.3	12.4	16.8	17.8	17.2	39.0	16.8

Group: Body :	B.Syn.C. Mis.	Slo.	NELC	Wis.	ELS	Sub-total	GRAND TOTAL
Pastors:	147	8	4	12	5	176	456
H.Cs. :	3639	181	93	219	55	4187	8878
Mean :	24.8	22.6	23.2	18.2	11.0	23.8	19.5

The frequency of Holy Communion services in congregations of the Synodical Conference markedly excels the same one for

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[1] Cf. supra, p. 212, notes 7 and 8; p. 217.

[2] The pastors were asked how often they had heard Public Confession during the last year. This question was intended to acquire information about the special Public Confession services conducted in the congregations. It was not well formulated because a large number of pastors understood it to mean the order of Public Confession conducted in the beginning of every Sunday service. The bias involved in the question invalidates the answers.

National Lutheran Council parishes (23.8 and 16.8). Having in mind the larger percentage of Synodical Conference pastors practicing Private Confession than the ones in the National Lutheran Council (Table 10: 56% as compared to 38%), one has reason to believe that there is a connection between frequency of Holy Communion services and the practice of Private Confession. Dividing the pastors into three groups according to frequency of Holy Communion services, the following figures resulted:

Table 12-B

NUMBER OF PASTORS PRACTICING AND NOT PRACTICING PRIVATE CONFESSION IN CONGREGATIONS OF DIFFERENT ANNUAL FREQUENCY OF HOLY COMMUNION SERVICES

Frequ. of Holy Com. services	P	NP	Total
11 and less a year	42	76	118
12-17 a year	87	98	185
18 and more a year	78	75	153
TOTAL	207	249	456

* $\chi^2 = 6{,}746$; $p < .05$

χ^2 test applied to these figures shows that the difference is of statistical significance.* The top group (congregations having Holy Communion eleven or less times a year) has a larger proportion of pastors not practicing Private Confession than expected by chance; the lowest group has a larger proportion of pastors practicing Private Confession than expected. Thus the relationship is obvious: The more Holy Communion services, the more likely the practice of Private Confession.

In questioning this, no facts can be presented from our study. However, there are at least three hypotheses which may suggest the reason: (1) The tradition of announcing the intention to participate in the Lord's Supper is widely maintained in American Lutheranism. By a larger frequency of Holy Communion services, people are given occasion to see the pastor more often; this opportunity also results in a more frequent use of pastoral care, of which Private Confession is a part. (2) The more frequent use of Holy Communion services is related to the "liturgical movement" which is of considerable influence among Lutheran clergy and churches. Connected with this movement is an emphasis on using Private Confession in the care of souls. (3) From Lutheran preaching on Law and Gospel, parishioners are afraid to take Holy Communion in an "unworthy manner" (I Cor. 11:27),[1] and want to be absolved before participating.

2. Informal Services.

By "informal services" or "music services" are meant services in the church not following any special order or setting.

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[1] The commonly accepted interpretation of I Cor. 11:27 as related to the sensual celebration of the Lord's Supper among the Corinthians, very often seems to be neglected.

Table 13-A

ANNUAL FREQUENCY OF "INFORMAL SERVICES" IN DIFFERENT BODIES AND GROUPS

Group:	A.NLC.						Sub-total
Body :	ALC	AELC	Aug.	Suo.	ULCA	Free	
Pastors:	111	5	35	8	111	6	276
Inf.Ser:	655	33	351	40	559	112	1750
Mean :	5.9	6.6	10.0	5.0	5.0	18.7	6.3

Group:	B.Syn.C.					Sub-total	GRAND TOTAL
Body :	Mis.	Slo.	NELC	Wis.	ELS		
Pastors:	142	7	4	12	5	170	446
Inf.Ser:	655	13	25	16	4	713	2463
Mean :	4.6	1.8	6.2	1.3	0.8	4.2	5.5

By again dividing (as Table 12-B) the pastors in three groups according to frequency of "informal services" in their congregations, the result is:

Table 13-B

NUMBER OF PASTORS PRACTICING AND NOT PRACTICING PRIVATE CONFESSION IN CONGREGATIONS OF DIFFERENT ANNUAL FREQUENCY OF "INFORMAL SERVICES"

Frequ. of Informal Services	P	NP	Total
0-1	65	93	158
2-5	65	67	132
6 or more	75	81	156
Total	205	241	446

The proportion of practicing and not practicing pastors differs some in the three groups, but is without any statistical significance. Thus the frequency of "informal services" seems to have no bearing upon the practice of Private Confession.

Pastors and congregations of the more "liturgical type" assumingly have less informal services than is usual in other congregations. Consequently the result presented in this table for the first group (0-1 informal services a year) seems to be contradictory to the second hypothesis stated in connection with Table 12-B (the practice of Private Confession related to the "liturgical movement"). However, even in churches of the "liturgical type," there are often "music services" at Easter and Christmas time. These services are listed, and the "liturgical congregations" may well be found in any group.

D. Instruction about Private Confession in Different Congregational Situations.

Instruction and education are central in any Christian church, and the Lutheran churches are no exception to this rule. We have previously seen the great stress put on Luther's Small Catechism,[1] a book which still claims a unique place in all Lutheran educational curriculums.

In this section the findings concerned with frequency of instruction of Private Confession in congregational settings will be presented and discussed. Our hypothesis is that practice of Private Confession is dependent upon instruction of it. The situations where instruction is mainly given are five: sermons, Sunday Schools, confirmation classes, adult study groups, and instruction to teachers. Tables for each of these settings will be presented showing annual frequency of instruction by pastors in different bodies and groups. Further, the result of the t-test[1] for significance in every case will be presented.

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[1] Cf. Part II, Chap. V, B.

1. Sermons.

The pulpit is the place where the pastor addresses his entire congregation every Sunday. Preaching has always been considered essential in Lutheranism. In the interpretation of God's Word, the pastor is an instructor and teacher simultaneously while preaching Law and Gospel. The pastors were therefore asked how many times they had used Private Confession as a topic in their sermons during the past year. The following table shows the results:

Table 14-A

ANNUAL FREQUENCY OF PRIVATE CONFESSION AS A TOPIC IN SERMONS

Group: Body :	A.NLC. ALC Pas.	AELC Pas.	Aug. Pas.	Suo. Pas.	ULCA Pas.	Free Pas.	Sub-total Pas.
Frequ.							
0	47	2	22	4	64	3	142
1	24	-	2	1	25	1	53
2	18	2	3	2	14	2	41
3	6	-	-	-	1	1	8
4	6	-	5	-	2	-	13
5	4	-	1	-	1	-	6
6	2	-	-	1	2	-	5
10/more*	3	-	2	-	4	-	9
Pastors:	110	4	35	8	113	7	277
Sermons:	164	4	53	11	121	8	361
Mean :	1.5	1.0	1.5	1.4	1.1	1.1	1.3

* In the total of sermons, the frequency is regarded as 10

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[1] Cf. *supra*, p. 260, note where formula for the t-test is given.

Table 14-A (cont.)

Group: Body :	B.Syn.C. Mis. Pas.	Slo. Pas.	NELC Pas.	Wis. Pas.	ELS Pas.	Sub-total Pas.	GRAND TOTAL Pas.
Frequ.							
0	60	2	2	7	1	72	214
1	33	1	1	3	1	39	92
2	24	2	-	3	2	31	72
3	14	-	-	-	1	15	23
4	4	2	-	-	-	6	19
5	3	-	-	-	-	3	9
6	2	-	-	-	-	2	7
8	1	-	-	-	-	1	1
10/more	3	-	1	-	-	4	13
Pastors:	144	7	4	13	5	173	450
Sermons:	204	13	11	9	8	245	606
Mean :	1.4	1.8	2.8	0.7	1.6	1.4	1.3

The frequency of using Private Confession for a sermon topic is about the same in the two groups, as it is among the different bodies (The National Evangelical Lutheran Church has a frequency of 2.8, but there are only four pastors counted in this mean, and therefore it is not a good estimate). Fifty-two percent of all pastors reported to have preached about Private Confession at least once; fifty-eight percent of those in the Synodical Conference; forty-nine of the National Lutheran Council pastors.

By dividing into two groups the pastors practicing (P) and not practicing (NP) Private Confession, Table 14-B resulted.

Table 14-B

ANNUAL FREQUENCY OF PRIVATE CONFESSION AS A TOPIC IN SERMONS BY PASTORS PRACTICING AND NOT PRACTICING PRIVATE CONFESSION

Topic in Sermons	P	NP	Total
Pastors:	206	244	450
Sermons:	379	227	606
Mean :	1.8	0.9	1.3

* $t = 5.000$; $p < .001$

Table 14-B shows that pastors practicing Private Confession preached about it twice as often on the average as those not practicing. The t-test on these figures showed that the proportions between groups was highly significant.* The conclusion is therefore: the more Private Confession is preached about, the more frequent can be expected the practice of it.

2. Sunday Schools.

Larger Lutheran churches often have a special director of Christian Education, thus giving the pastor few responsibilities in the actual education of children in Sunday School. Without making a distinction in this respect, the pastors were asked to indicate how often they had given instruction about Private Confession in Sunday School during the past year. Apparently due to this fact, there was a large percentage who had never given such instruction:

Table 15-A

ANNUAL FREQUENCY OF PASTOR' INSTRUCTION ABOUT PRIVATE CONFESSION IN SUNDAY SCHOOLS

Group: Body :	A.NLC. ALC Pas.	AELC Pas.	Aug. Pas.	Suo. Pas.	ULCA Pas.	Free Pas.	Sub- total Pas.
Frequ.							
0	80	4	26	4	90	4	208
1	9	-	2	1	8	1	21
2	7	-	1	1	5	-	14
3	2	-	2	-	5	1	10
4	4	-	-	-	2	-	6
5	1	-	1	2	-	-	4
6	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
8	1	-	-	-	1	-	2
10/more*	-	-	1	-	2	-	3
Pastors:	104	4	34	8	113	6	269
Instru.:	58	0	31	13	69	4	175
Mean :	0.6	0.0	0.9	1.6	0.6	0.7	0.6

* In the total of instructions, the frequency is regarded as 10.

Group: Body :	B.Syn.C. Mis. Pas.	Slo. Pas.	NELC Pas.	Wis. Pas.	ELS Pas.	Sub- total Pas.	GRAND TOTAL Pas.
Frequ.							
0	91	5	1	6	3	106	314
1	16	1	1	2	1	21	42
2	11	-	1	-	1	13	27
3	12	1	-	1	-	14	24
4	6	-	-	-	-	6	12
5	2	-	-	1	-	3	7
6	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
8	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
10/more	2	-	-	-	-	2	5
Pastors:	140	7	3	10	5	165	434
Instru.:	128	4	3	10	3	148	323
Mean :	0.9	0.6	1.0	1.0	0.6	0.9	0.7

Twenty-eight percent of the pastors gave instruction about Private Confession in Sunday School; twenty-three percent of the National Lutheran Council group; and thirty-six percent of the Synodical Conference group. The percentage is small, but still there is a relationship between this instruction and the practice of Private Confession as seen in Table 15-B.

Table 15-B

ANNUAL FREQUENCY OF INSTRUCTION IN SUNDAY SCHOOL ABOUT PRIVATE CONFESSION BY PASTORS PRACTICING AND NOT PRACTICING PRIVATE CONFESSION

Instruction in Sunday School	P	NP	Total
Pastors:	196	238	434
Instru.:	212	111	323
Mean :	1.1	0.5	0.7

* $t = 3.750$; $p < .001$

A t-test on these figures shows the proportions between groups to be highly significant,* so the conclusion is that more frequent instruction of Private Confession in Sunday School results in more frequent expectation of the practice of Private Confession in the congregation.

3. Confirmation Classes.

While there are relatively few pastors giving instruction about Private Confession in Sunday School, the opposite is true of confirmation classes. Traditionally the pastor instructs and teaches the confirmants. The reason for not all pastors doing so might be that there is more than one pastor in a congregation, and the other pastor happened to instruct the confirmation class that particular year. Luther's Small Catechism is included in any confirmation curriculum, and therefore the pastor having a class cannot avoid giving instruction about Private Confession at least once. The reports from the pastors is as follows:

Table 16-A

ANNUAL FREQUENCY OF PASTORS' INSTRUCTION ABOUT PRIVATE CONFESSION IN CONFIRMATION CLASSES

Group:	A.NLC.						Sub-
Body :	ALC	AELC	Aug.	Suo.	ULCA	Free	total
	Pas.	Pas.	Pas.	Pas.	Pas.	Pas.	Pas.
Frequ.							
0	5	-	5	-	15	1	26
1	24	2	7	-	26	2	61
2	29	1	10	3	29	2	74
3	14	2	6	2	14	1	39
4	14	-	2	1	11	-	28
5	5	-	2	-	2	-	9
6	10	-	1	1	3	-	15
7	1	-	-	-	1	-	2
8	1	-	1	1	2	-	5
9	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
10/more	3	-	2	-	8	1	14
Pastors:	107	5	36	8	111	7	274
Instru.:	319	10	97	30	301	19	776
Mean :	3.0	2.0	2.7	3.8	2.7	2.7	2.8

* In the total of instructions, the frequency is regarded as 10.

Group:	B.Syn.C.					Sub-	GRAND
Body :	Mis.	Slo.	NELC	Wis.	ELS	total	TOTAL
	Pas.	Pas.	Pas.	Pas.	Pas.	Pas.	Pas.
Frequ.							
0	2	-	-	-	-	2	28
1	14	-	1	-	-	15	76
2	25	4	-	3	2	34	108
3	31	1	1	4	1	38	77
4	30	-	-	3	1	34	62
5	15	1	-	2	-	18	27
6	10	1	1	-	1	13	28
7	4	-	-	-	-	4	6
8	3	-	-	-	-	3	8
9	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
10/more	11	-	1	1	-	13	27
Pastors:	145	7	4	13	5	174	448
Instru.:	574	22	20	50	17	683	1459
Mean :	4.0	3.1	5.0	3.8	3.4	3.9	3.2

The over-all picture shows that only six percent of the pastors have not given instruction about Private Confession; for the two groups ninety-one percent of the National Lutheran Council pastors have given instruction, and ninety-nine percent of the Synodical Conference pastors. The latter group also has a higher mean than the former. Following the same procedure as above, the analysis shows:

Table 16-B

ANNUAL FREQUENCY OF INSTRUCTION ABOUT PRIVATE CONFESSION IN CONFIRMATION CLASSES BY PASTORS PRACTICING AND NOT PRACTICING PRIVATE CONFESSION

Instruction in confirmation classes	P	NP	Total
Pastors:	204	244	448
Instru.:	814	645	1459
Mean :	4.0	2.6	3.2

* t = 6.667; $p < .001$

The proportions between pastors and cases in the two groups are worth noticing, and a statistical t-test proved the result to be highly significant.* Thus, again the conclusion is that the more frequently instruction is given about Private Confession in confirmation classes, the more it will be practiced by the minister and parishioners in pastoral care.

4. Adult Study Groups.

The fourth instructional situation in which the pastor is involved in a congregation, is that of adult groups. But for the possible exception of adult groups for membership, the setting is more advanced than confirmation instruction. Some of the subjects discussed may be the same, but the instruction is kept on a higher level, which may be seen by looking at the materials published by different bodies. The pastor may or may not bring up the matter of Private Confession, depending on his own interest in it as well as interest of the participants. The question was felt to be of great importance showing how widespread is a concern for Private Confession. It was formulated: "How often have you given instruction about Private Confession in adult Bible classes, study groups etc., during the last year?"[1] The answers resulted in Table 17-A.

Table 17-A

ANNUAL FREQUENCY OF PASTORS' INSTRUCTION ABOUT PRIVATE CONFESSION IN ADULT BIBLE CLASSES, STUDY GROUPS, ETC.

Group:	A.NLC.						Sub-
Body :	ALC	AELC	Aug.	Suo.	ULCA	Free	total
	Pas.	Pas.	Pas.	Pas.	Pas.	Pas.	Pas.
Frequ.							
0	24	3	13	-	44	3	87
1	35	1	1	3	19	1	60
2	17	-	10	2	16	2	47
3	12	-	6	-	12	-	30
4	8	1	2	1	12	1	25
5	2	-	1	1	4	-	8
6	7	-	-	1	2	-	10
8	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
10/more*	-	-	2	-	3	-	5
Pastors:	107	5	35	8	112	7	274
Instru.:	205	5	52	22	197	9	490
Mean	1.9	1.0	1.5	2.8	1.8	1.3	1.8

* In the total of instructions, the frequency is regarded as 10.

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[1] Cf. Appendix III, Qu. 13.

Table 17-A (cont)

Group: B.Syn.C. Body :	Mis. Pas.	Slo. Pas.	NELC Pas.	Wis. Pas.	ELS Pas.	Sub-total Pas.	GRAND TOTAL Pas.
Frequ.							
0	33	1	1	4	3	42	129
1	25	2	1	2	-	30	90
2	28	3	-	1	2	34	81
3	20	-	-	3	-	23	53
4	17	-	2	2	-	21	46
5	6	1	-	-	-	7	15
6	5	-	-	-	-	5	15
7	1	-	-	-	-	1	1
8	2	-	-	-	-	2	4
10/more	8	-	-	-	-	8	13
Pastors:	145	7	4	12	5	173	447
Instru.:	372	13	9	21	4	419	909
Mean :	2.6	1.8	2.2	1.8	0.8	2.4	2.0

The Synodical Conference group of pastors had a slightly higher mean than the National Lutheran Council pastors (2.4 as compared to 1.8). Twenty-nine percent of all pastors never gave instruction about Private Confession in adult groups; applied to the two groups (A and B) the percentages are thirty-two and twenty-four. This means that on the average seven of ten pastors did give instruction among adults about Private Confession.

Table 17-B

ANNUAL FREQUENCY OF INSTRUCTION ABOUT PRIVATE CONFESSION IN ADULT BIBLE CLASSES, STUDY GROUPS, ETC., BY PASTORS PRACTICING AND NOT PRACTICING PRIVATE CONFESSION

Instruction in adult classes	P	NP	Total
Pastors:	205	242	447
Instru.:	508	401	909
Mean :	2.5	1.7	2.0

* $t = 4.000$; $p < .001$

These differences between means are of high statistical significance (see * on previous page), and the conclusion is that the more frequently instruction is given about Private Confession in adult study groups and Bible classes, the more frequent the practice can be expected in a congregational setting.

5. To People Teaching in the Congregation.

Finally is considered the situation in which the pastor gives instruction to the teachers of his congregation, especially the Sunday School teachers. To ascertain whether in this setting Private Confession was ever mentioned, the pastors were asked how often they had given instruction about Private Confession to such groups. Even if the majority of pastors never had given such instruction, the number of those replying in the affirmative still may be regarded as surprisingly high:

Table 18-A

ANNUAL FREQUENCY OF PASTORS' INSTRUCTION ABOUT PRIVATE CONFESSION TO PEOPLE TEACHING IN THE CONGREGATION

Group:	A.NLC.						
Body :	ALC Pas.	AELC Pas.	Aug. Pas.	Suo. Pas.	ULCA Pas.	Free Pas.	Sub-total Pas.
Frequ.							
0 :	67	4	20	3	88	4	186
1 :	18	-	6	1	9	1	35
2 :	7	-	5	2	5	-	19
3 :	7	-	1	-	4	-	12
4 :	3	-	-	1	1	1	6
5 :	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
6 :	3	-	-	-	1	-	4
10/more*:	-	-	2	1	3	-	6
Pastors:	106	4	34	8	111	6	269
Instru.:	88	0	39	19	71	5	222
Mean :	0.8	0.0	1.1	2.4	0.6	0.8	0.8

* In the total of instructions, the frequency is regarded as 10.

Group:	B.Syn.C.						
Body :	Mis. Pas.	Slo. Pas.	NELC Pas.	Wis. Pas.	ELS Pas.	Sub-total Pas.	GRAND TOTAL Pas.
Frequ.							
0 :	75	3	1	8	2	89	275
1 :	25	3	1	1	1	31	66
2 :	16	1	-	3	2	22	41
3 :	12	-	2	-	-	14	26
4 :	7	-	-	-	-	7	13
5 :	4	-	-	-	-	4	5
6 :	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
10/more:	3	-	-	-	-	3	9
Pastors:	142	7	4	12	5	170	439
Instru.:	171	5	7	7	5	195	417
Mean :	1.2	0.7	1.8	0.6	1.0	1.1	0.9

Thirty-one percent of the National Lutheran Council pastors gave instruction of this kind; forty-eight percent of the Synodical Conference pastors; the over-all percentage was thirty-seven giving instruction about Private Confession to people teaching others in the congregation.

Grouping pastors the usual way of those practicing and not practicing Private Confession, Table 18-B resulted:

Table 18-B

ANNUAL FREQUENCY OF INSTRUCTION ABOUT PRIVATE CONFESSION TO PEOPLE TEACHING IN THE CONGREGATION BY PASTORS PRACTICING AND NOT PRACTICING PRIVATE CONFESSION

Instruction to teachers	P	NP	Total
Pastors:	204	235	439
Instru.:	254	163	417
Mean :	1.2	0.7	0.9

* $t = 2.778$; $p < .01$

The difference between the means is proportionately less than in the other four settings described above, but still large enough to be of statistical significance.* Thus the conclusion is that the more instruction given about Private Confession to people teaching in the congregation, the more frequently the practice of Private Confession in congregations can be expected.

Our research presented about instruction of Private Confession in various congregational situations shows that they all are significant in retaining its practice. The tables state that instruction is frequently given in some situation or other; as a whole, more by the Synodical Conference pastors than the pastors of the National Lutheran Council group. This fits with the general picture of a larger proportion of the former pastors also practicing Private Confession with a larger frequency than the latter group (Table 10).

All Lutheran pastors considered together, the comparison of proportions between practicing (P) and not practicing (NP) pastors has provided the result that the pastors practicing

Private Confession give more instruction about it than the others. Statistical tests applied to the difference between means have proved that they are all of statistical significance, in fact far below the figure which is regarded necessary (Cf. p. 260, note 1; $p < .05$ is taken to be significant; in four of the tests above the results were $p < .001$; in the last test $p < .01$).

The hypothesis of a relation between instruction and practice of Private Confession was perhaps self-evident. Our results have confirmed that the relationship is of great significance, and we are justified in making the following statement: The more instruction given about Private Confession in any congregational situation, the more frequent the practice of it can be expected.

CHAPTER VIII

MINISTERIAL FACTORS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE PRACTICE OF PRIVATE CONFESSION

> "It behooves a prudent minister of God to preserve honor and reverence for his ministry among those who are under him. It behooves a faithful minister not to go to extremes and not arrogantly to misuse his office but to administer it only for the benefit of those who are under him."[1]

The content of these words, written by Luther in 1515, always remained a guiding principle for his ministry, and seems to have been passed along to Lutheran pastors during the centuries. Our task is not to discuss the role of the minister in contemporary church life.[2] However, because the Lutheran pastor is very much the center of his parish, his influence is great and he is often able to alter traditions or introduce new ideas.

Generally the congregation can do little to maintain or introduce the practice of Private Confession if the pastor opposes it. On the other hand, if the pastor wants to use Private Confession in the care of souls he will usually succeed to a certain extent. With the Lutheran teaching on Private Confession as a basis, he is free to give unopposed instruction concerning it. Thus a positive attitude of the pastor toward

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[1] W 56, 160; from a lecture on Rom. 1:1.

[2] Valuable research is available in this field. Cf. The Ministry in Historical Perspectives, ed. by H. Richard Niebuhr and Daniel D. Williams (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956); Samuel W. Blizzard, "The Clergyman Views Himself," Christian Advocate, Dec. 1960, pp. 10ff. A survey report is given by Dr. Blizzard in Religious Education, July-Aug. 1958.

Private Confession is essential in the practice of it. His attitude, however, is influenced by many factors. His background from boyhood, may give him definite opinions of Private Confession; his education, theological position and role definition are also important; his knowledge and evaluation of Private Confession must be considered in this connection; and his own practice of Private Confession as well as his attitude to contemporary "pastoral psychology" possibly influence his approach in the parish.

These and other factors were felt to be of value in relation to the hypothesis. Following the same method as the previous chapter, this chapter will present the findings of ministerial or pastoral factors and their influence on the practice of Private Confession. The chapter is divided into twelve sections (A to M) each of which deals with special factors.

A. The Pastor's Background.

Three factors seemed to present possible significance in this connection, namely the pastor's parentage, i.e., if the parents were native Americans or not; the pastor's own place of birth, i.e., born in the United States or outside; and the type of community in which the pastor was reared, i.e., city, town, rural or suburban community. The answers gave the findings described in subsections 1, 2, and 3.[1]

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[1] The first coding tables showing how many pastors from the different bodies and groups were born outside the United States, how many of them had American parentage, or one American and one non-American, or both born outside the United States, are not

1. Parentage.

Parents usually give some of their practices and habits to their children. A "foreign" influence might have some bearing on a pastor's attitude toward Private Confession. Therefore, the pastors were divided into three groups, those having both parents as native Americans; those having one as native and one born outside the United States; and those having both parents from abroad. These are groups A, B, and C in Table 19. Further, each of the groups was divided into pastors practicing (P) and not practicing (NP) Private Confession.

Table 19

PARENTAGE OF PASTORS PRACTICING AND NOT PRACTICING PRIVATE CONFESSION

Parentage	P	NP	Total
A. Both native Americans	141	164	305
B. One American, one not American	36	42	78
C. Both non-native Americans	31	44	75
TOTAL	208	250	458

The proportions found in these groups are very similar, and they indicate that parental background has no influence on the practice of Private Confession. This is confirmed by statistical testing.

2. Country of Birth and Upbringing.

Related to the pastor's parentage is the place of birth and upbringing. Making the same distinction as above, one group

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presented because they cannot be found to provide any special interest. The three tables in section A of this chapter are based on pastoral background in general.

of pastors born and raised in the United States, a second group either born or raised outside the United States, and a third group of pastors both born and raised in another country, the result was:

Table 20

COUNTRY OF BIRTH AND UPBRINGING OF PASTORS PRACTICING AND NOT PRACTICING PRIVATE CONFESSION

Country	P	NP	Total
A. Born and raised in America	185	232	417
B. Born or raised outside America	13	10	23
C. Born and raised outside America	10	6	16
TOTAL	208	248	456

The table shows a difference in proportion between group A on the one hand, and groups B and C on the other. However, we cannot draw any conclusions because no statistical significance can be found. The categories of groups B and C have small numbers obviously influencing a statistical test. Since the pastors not born and raised in this country represent only a small percentage (less than 10%) of all pastors having answered the question, we cannot categorically say that place of birth and upbringing has no significance whatever in the practice of Private Confession. However, we can say that in this sampling it has no significance.

3. Type of Community Where Reared.

In analyzing the information about the type of community in which a pastor was reared, no distinction was made between the United States and other countries even if, for example, a town community may differ considerably inside and outside America. Recalling the small percentage of pastors born and raised outside the United States (less than 10%), it seemed justifiable to omit any distinction of this kind. The grouping is made according to rural, town, city and suburban community.

Table 21

TYPE OF COMMUNITY IN WHICH PASTORS PRACTICING AND NOT PRACTICING PRIVATE CONFESSION WERE REARED

Community	P	NP	Total
A. Rural	90	101	191
B. Town	62	64	126
C. City	50	81	131
D. Suburb of city	6	4	10
TOTAL	208	250	458

* $\chi^2 = 4.714$; $p < .20$

A smaller proportion of pastors reared in a city practice Private Confession than pastors reared in a town (The number of pastors from a suburban type of community is too few to permit any interpretation.). The difference, however, is not large enough to show any statistical significance.*

Thus the conclusion from our sample of the pastors' background is: Parentage, place of birth and upbringing, and type of community where reared are apparently of no influence on the pastor's practice of Private Confession. This "negative" discovery points toward a "positive" interpretation: The possible influence of the pastors' backgrounds on the practice of Private Confession has been greatly reduced by more influential factors. Such factors would, according to our hypothesis, mainly be the pastors' education and training, which are the next objects to be discussed.

B. The Pastor's Education.

All pastors in this survey have seminary training.[1] The subjects which supposedly deal with Private Confession are mainly three: (1) The Lutheran confessional writings where Private Confession has a large place; (2) Actual teaching concerning the doctrine and history of Private Confession; (3) The practice of Private Confession in the required pastoral care training program. The pastors gave information in all three fields.

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[1] All pastors except nine listed the name of the seminary or divinity school where they received theological training. Fourteen attended two schools. The four hundred and fifty-seven pastors giving the information, have their theological degrees from thirty-seven different seminaries. By analyzing the relation between the place of training with practice of Private Confession, we might have obtained some information concerning the stress the various seminaries put upon Private Confession. However, twenty-seven of the thirty-seven seminaries have graduated less than ten pastors involved in our survey. We have no right to draw conclusions from such a small number, and therefore the discussion on the importance of the place of seminary training is omitted.

An almost unlimited variety of inquiries could have been made from the questionnaire by comparing two or more independent variables. Many of the results might have been of interest. For example, one could see how the different age groups of pastors graduating from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis (118) regarded the confessional teaching of their seminary, their recollection of Private Confession as taught in theory and practice, and the influence these aspects had on instructing it in the various congregations. The same could be done for other well represented seminaries. Such inquiries are omitted in this presentation because they are first expensive and time consuming, and second they seem to have slight bearing upon our special interest.

1. Confessional Position of the Seminary.

The pastors were asked for their opinion on the following question: "To what extent did your seminary teachers regard the confessional books (the Book of Concord or those parts of it that are accepted as confessional by your denomination) as a norm or standard for the ministry?"[1] The answers are found in Table 22-A.

Table 22-A

PASTORS' OPINION OF THEIR SEMINARY TEACHERS' REGARD OF THE CONFESSIONAL BOOKS AS A NORM OR STANDARD FOR THE MINISTRY

Group: A.NLC. Body :	ALC Pas.	AELC Pas.	Aug. Pas.	Suo. Pas.	ULCA Pas.	Free Pas.	Sub-total Pas.
Rating							
1:very mu.	73	1	20	6	53	2	155
2:much	38	1	16	1	45	5	106
3:n.v.mu.	2	2	2	1	9	-	16
4:n.at all	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Pastors	113	5	38	8	107	7	278
Score	155	13	58	11	170	12	419
Mean[2]	1.4	2.6	1.5	1.4	1.6	1.7	1.5

Group: B.Syn.C. Body :	Mis. Pas.	Slo. Pas.	NELC Pas.	Wis. Pas.	ELS Pas.	Sub-total Pas.	GRAND TOTAL Pas.
Rating							
1:very much	126	6	4	12	4	152	307
2:much	20	2	-	1	-	23	129
3:n.v.mu.	1	-	-	-	1	2	18
4:not at all	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Pastors	147	8	4	13	5	177	454
Score	169	10	4	14	7	204	623
Mean	1.1	1.2	1.0	1.1	1.4	1.2	1.4

[1] Appendix III, Qu. 40.

[2] The "mean" shows the rating. Thus a mean of 1.4 for the American Lutheran Church (ALC) indicates that generally the pastors have the opinion that their seminary teachers were a little closer to "very much" (rating 1) than to "much" (rating 2) in regarding the confessional books as normative for the ministry.

According to Table 22-A, there is considerable confessional emphasis in contemporary American training of future Lutheran ministers. Ninety-six percent of all pastors rated it as being stressed "very much" or "much," ninety-four percent of the National Lutheran Council group; and ninety-nine percent of the pastors in the Synodical Conference. These percentages are extremely high, and they reveal the importance of teaching in making seminaries and pastors aware of Private Confession as a part of Lutheran pastoral care.

The matter of degree in the rating between "much" and "very much" is clarified by Table 22-B. Grouping the pastors practicing and not practicing Private Confession in three categories, interesting numbers and proportions appear:

Table 22-B

CONFESSIONAL STRESS IN SEMINARY TEACHING AS REGARDED BY PASTORS PRACTICING AND NOT PRACTICING PRIVATE CONFESSION

Stress	P	NP	Total
1. Very much	155	152	307
2. Much	45	84	129
3. & 4. Not very much or Not at all	7	12	19
TOTAL	207	248	455

* $\chi^2 = 9.486$; $p < .01$

There are more pastors practicing than not practicing Private Confession in the first group, while there is a marked negative difference between the second and last groups. As may be expected by checking the figures, they are of statistical significance.* Thus the inevitable conclusion is: The more stress the seminaries place on confessional teaching, the more pastors will likely practice Private Confession in the parishes.

2. Seminary Instruction on Confession and Absolution.

Since Private Confession is a special form of confession and absolution, but strongly related to other forms in that all of them include confession of sins and God's forgiveness, the questions concerning seminary training were formulated to get an impression of the teaching of confession and absolution as a whole.

Table 23-A

PASTORS' OPINION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH TEACHING ABOUT CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION WAS INCLUDED IN THEIR SEMINARY TRAINING

Group: A.NLC. Body :	ALC Pas.	AELC Pas.	Aug. Pas.	Suo. Pas.	ULCA Pas.	Free Pas.	Sub-total Pas.
Rating							
1:very much	5	2	1	3	5	-	16
2:much	35	-	4	3	16	-	58
3:n. v.much	70	2	28	2	77	5	184
4:not at all	2	1	5	-	12	2	22
Pastors	112	5	38	8	110	7	280
Score	293	12	113	15	316	23	772
Mean	2.6	2.4	3.0	1.9	2.9	3.3	2.8

Group: B.Syn.C. Body :	Mis. Pas.	Slo. Pas.	NELC Pas.	Wis. Pas.	ELS Pas.	Sub-total Pas.	GRAND TOTAL Pas.
Rating							
1:very much	7	2	1	2	1	13	29
2:much	51	-	2	6	3	62	120
3:n.v. much	86	6	1	4	1	98	282
4:not at all	3	-	-	-	-	3	25
Pastors	147	8	4	12	5	176	456
Score	379	20	8	26	10	443	1215
Mean	2.6	2.5	2.0	2.2	2.0	2.5	2.7

The mean of 2.7 for all pastors tells that the extent of teaching about confession and absolution in the seminary was closer to "not very much" than to "much." However a sizeable number of pastors apparently had teachers who taught "much" and even "very much" about confession and absolution. Forty-three percent of the Synodical Conference pastors made these ratings and twenty-six percent of the pastors from the National Lutheran Council, the average being thirty-three percent.

Using this one group of pastors and comparing them with the others, we immediately see the importance of seminary teaching in the practice of Private Confession.

Table 23-B

SEMINARY TEACHING ABOUT CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION AS REGARDED BY PASTORS PRACTICING AND NOT PRACTICING PRIVATE CONFESSION

Extent of teaching	P	NP	Total
1 and 2: Very much, much	82	67	149
3 and 4: Not very much, not at all	125	182	307
TOTAL	207	249	456

* $X^2 = 8.339$; $p < .01$

Again the proportions are so different that a statistical test* leaves no room for doubt. We can safely conclude what might have been expected: The more instruction given on confession and absolution in seminary, the more pastors will practice Private Confession in their congregations.

3. Practice of Confession and Absolution in Required Pastoral Care Training.

At the present time most seminaries provide a training program which includes not only lectures and seminars, but also field work. It is felt that field work gives the future minister contact among the people with whom he will be working. Further, he will learn administrative responsibilities and get the feel of parish life and work. His activities are usually supervised directly by the seminary or a pastor approved by the seminary. This special aspect of theological education and training, of which pastoral care is a part, was felt to be of possible significance to the practice of Private Confession, and therefore the pastors were asked: "How important was the practice of confession and absolution in the required pastoral care training during your seminary years?"[1]

See p. 311.

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[1] Appendix III, Qu. 41.

Table 24-A

PASTORS' OPINION OF HOW IMPORTANT WAS PRACTICE OF CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION IN THE REQUIRED PASTORAL CARE TRAINING DURING THEIR SEMINARY YEARS

Group: A.ALC. Body : Rating	ALC Pas.	AELC Pas.	Aug. Pas.	Suo. Pas.	ULCA Pas.	Free Pas.	Sub-total Pas.
1:very imp.	12	-	2	2	7	-	23
2:important	28	2	5	2	22	2	61
3:somewhat imp.	39	1	12	3	33	2	90
4:not v. imp.	28	1	13	1	31	2	76
5:not imp.	2	1	6	-	17	1	27
Pastors	109	5	38	8	110	7	277
Score	307	16	130	19	359	23	854
Mean	2.8	3.2	3.4	2.4	3.3	3.3	3.1

Group: B.Syn.C. Body : Rating	Mis. Pas.	Slo. Pas.	NELC Pas.	Wis. Pas.	ELS Pas.	Sub-total Pas.	GRAND TOTAL Pas.
1:very imp.	15	2	1	1	2	21	44
2:important	43	3	3	7	-	56	117
3:somewhat imp.	41	2	-	5	2	50	140
4:not v. imp.	42	1	-	1	1	45	121
5:not imp.	4	-	-	1	-	5	32
Pastors	145	8	4	15	5	177	454
Score	412	18	7	39	12	488	1342
Mean	2.8	2.2	1.8	2.6	2.4	2.8	3.0

The rating is concentrated in the three middle categories, and the mean for all pastors is 3.0, or "somewhat important." Nowhere within the different bodies is the mean rated above "important" (but for NELC which has listed only four pastors), and several bodies have a mean tending toward "not very important." More emphasis is apparent in the Synodical Conference than in the National Lutheran Council. For statistical testing Table 24-B was used.

Table 24-B

IMPORTANCE OF PRACTICE OF CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION IN REQUIRED PASTORAL CARE PROGRAM IN SEMINARY YEARS AS REGARDED BY PASTORS PRACTICING AND NOT PRACTICING PRIVATE CONFESSION

Importance of practice	P	NP	Total
1 and 2: very important, important	80	80	160
3 : somewhat important	67	74	141
4 and 5: not very important, not imp.	57	96	153
TOTAL	204	250	454

* $\chi^2 = 5.644$; $p < .10$

The first group has a larger proportion practicing Private Confession than the other two. The statistical test shows that there is a trend toward significance.* We therefore cannot draw any conclusion, but there is seemingly a weak relation between the importance of practice of confession and absolution in the seminary's training in pastoral care, and the number of pastors practicing Private Confession. The tendency is: the more importance placed on the practice of confession and absolution in the seminary years, the more pastors will practice Private Confession.

Considering the combined areas mentioned above, the instruction and training given the future pastor in the seminary are significant for the practice of Private Confession. From a statistical point of view, two of the areas proved to be significant, and one had a trend toward significance. A general conclusion of the importance of theological training for the practice of Private Confession, consequently is: The more stress the seminary placed on the confessional writings, the more teaching given about Private Confession, and probably the more practice of it introduced in the pastoral care training program, the more the practice of Private Confession can be expected in the congregations.

C. The Pastor's Denominational Affiliation.

In discussing some evidences of Private Confession in American Lutheranism we stated that bodies affiliated with the Synodical Conference are more strict confessionally than other Lutheran bodies. Further, it was shown that the editions of Luther's Small Catechism used by the Synodical Conference usually contain the section on "The Office of the Keys" while it is commonly omitted by other churches. These two factors were believed to increase the practice of Private Confession. In regarding the pastor's denominational affiliation as a variable influence on the practice of Private Confession, our theory consequently was that pastors affiliated with the Synodical Conference were more apt to use the means of Private Confession than their colleagues in other Lutheran church bodies. The descriptive tables in this connection were presented in the previous chapter. As seen in Table 6, the percentage of pastors practicing Private Confession is considerably higher in the Synodical Conference group than in the other (56% and 38%). The same table also states the number and percentage for each body or denomination. In testing statistically the proportions of pastors practicing and not practicing Private Confession, the distinction could not be made according to church body because such small numbers of pastors participated in some of them. The Synodical Conference pastors were regarded as one group. The pastors in the National Lutheran Council were divided into two: First, the American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Free Church (since these two may merge in the near future); second, the other bodies which are supposed to merge in the Lutheran Church of America (In Table 25 these latter groups are called NLC-1 and NLC-2.).

Table 25

LUTHERAN CHURCH GROUPS AND NUMBER OF PASTORS PRACTICING AND NOT PRACTICING PRIVATE CONFESSION

Church group	P	NP	Total
A. NLC-1 (ALC, Free)	46	74	120
NLC-2 (AELC,Aug,Suo,ULCA)	61	104	165
B. Syn.C (Mis,Slo,NELC,Wis,ELC)	102	79	181
TOTAL	209	257	466

* $\chi^2 = 15.854$; $p < .001$

A statistical test showed the difference to be highly significant.* The conclusion therefore is: Private Confession is likely to be practiced much more frequently by pastors in the Synodical Conference than by pastors affiliated with either of the two main groups within the National Lutheran Council. The interpretation of this finding is simple for it points back to the basis for the theory: A strict confessional view, as well as teaching of "The Office of the Keys" will strengthen the practice of Private Confession.

D. The Pastor's Theological Position.

Connected somewhat with the variable of the pastor's denominational affiliation is his theological position. Our theory was that a pastor who regarded himself as conservative or fundamentalist, was more likely to practice Private Confession than a pastor having another theological view. Many Lutheran ministers found it rather difficult to identify themselves with a specific theological position. In anticipation of this, the questionnaire offered an additional rubric for pastors who considered themselves something other than fundamentalist, conservative, neo-orthodox, or liberal.[1] Almost ten percent of the pastors took the extra rubric provided, but the statements were so diverse the survey could only regard them as "not classified."

Table 26-A presents the findings. They are interesting in that only twenty-five pastors (5%) claim to have a liberal theological view, while three hundred and twenty-five (70%) regard themselves as conservative theologians. To this latter group we may add "the fundamentalists" a very conservative element, thus eighty percent of all Lutheran pastors in the United States have, at least in this sample, a conservative theological position. The finding confirms the discussion above,[2] namely the strong conservative tendency in contemporary American Lutheranism.

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[1] After much discussion these four positions were agreed upon.

[2] Cf. supra, pp. 188-193.

Table 26-A

PASTORS' GENERAL CLASSIFICATION OF THEIR THEOLOGICAL POSITION

Group: A.NLC. Body :	ALC Pas.	AELC Pas.	Aug. Pas.	Suo. Pas.	ULCA Pas.	Free Pas.	Sub-total Pas.
Position							
fundamental.:	14	1	1	-	3	-	19
conservative:	79	1	27	5	64	7	183
neo-orthodox:	4	1	3	2	22	-	32
liberal :	6	2	1	1	15	-	25
not classi.*:	10	-	6	-	10	-	26
TOTAL :	113	5	38	8	114	7	285

* Includes pastors listing "other position," and not answering.

Group: B.Syn.C. Body :	Mis. Pas.	Slo. Pas.	NELC Pas.	Wis. Pas.	ELS Pas.	Sub-total Pas.	GRAND TOTAL Pas.
Position							
fundamental.:	21	4	1	3	-	29	48
conservative:	121	4	3	9	5	142	325
neo-orthodox:	-	-	-	-	-	-	32
liberal :	-	-	-	-	-	-	25
not classi. :	7	-	-	3	-	10	36
TOTAL :	149	8	4	15	5	181	466

As for any statistical significance of the theological position in the practice or non-practice of Private Confession, the analysis showed the different groups to have very similar proportions.

Table 26-B

THEOLOGICAL POSITION FOR PASTORS PRACTICING AND NOT PRACTICING PRIVATE CONFESSION

Theological position	P	NP	Total
Fundamentalist	27	21	48
Conservative	148	177	325
Neo-orthodox	10	22	32
Liberal	10	15	25
Not classified	14	22	36
TOTAL	209	257	466

The statistical test gave no result of significance. However, four of the groups are too small to draw any definite conclusions. Thus it is not wise to offer an interpretation.

E. The Pastor's Experience.

The original theory was rather contradictory concerning the relationship between the pastors' experience and the practice of Private Confession. On the one hand it was believed that ethnic background and tradition would have a positive influence on the practice. Therefore the older pastors were expected to use Private Confession more than the younger ones. On the other hand, the stress on pastoral care in contemporary theological education coupled with the so-called liturgical movement would favor a practice of Private Confession among younger pastors as compared to the older ones.

Ethnic background and tradition did not display any significance on the practice of Private Confession as discussed above.[1] Therefore, at this point, what remains of the original theory in our discussion, is that Private Confession should be more frequently found among younger pastors than older ones. Assuming that young congregations usually are served by younger pastors, this theory is substantiated by the statistical trend of significance found in the larger proportion of Private Confession in new congregations than in older ones.[2]

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[1] Cf. supra, pp. 302-306.

[2] Cf. supra, pp. 279f.

A pastor's experience is related to age and year of ordination. Both questions were answered by the ministers. The information given, however, proved to be of no statistical significance.* Still the table presents an observation worth mentioning, and Table 27 shows the practicing and not practicing (P and NP) pastors divided by age groups.

Table 27

AGE GROUPS OF PASTORS PRACTICING AND NOT PRACTICING PRIVATE CONFESSION

Age	P	NP	Total
1. 29 years or less	30	44	74
2. 30-39 years	80	69	149
3. 40-49 years	46	63	109
4. 50 years or more	52	74	126
TOTAL	208	250	458

* $\chi = 6.122$; $p < .20$

The proportions are somewhat similar between the different groups except for the age group of thirty to thirty-nine years. In the present sample these pastors practice Private Confession more than the other pastors.[1] Somewhat surprising, from a theoretical point of view, the youngest pastors (29 years of age or less) show a smaller proportion of pastors practicing Private Confession even than expected by chance.[1] Believing that they have no less concern for the means of Private Confession in pastoral care than their older colleagues (the pastors in the group 30-39 years of age) the interpretation offered is: (1) The pastor of twenty-nine years or less is often assistant pastor in a congregation. In that case the rector is responsible for most cases of pastoral care due both to the fact that the parishioners know him and a pastoral relationship is established, and to the fact that the assistant minister usually has charge of youth activities. (2) The newly ordained pastor is so young and has so little experience that parishioners hesitate confessing to him. These two factors change when the pastor is more than thirty years old, and he has more opportunities for Private Confession.

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[1] The same observation could be made if the table of year of ordination had been presented. The figures are, as could be expected, quite similar to those stated in Table 27. The proportion between N and NP pastors is close to chance expectation in all groups but one, the pastors having been ordained between the years 1947-1956. Here the number of pastors practicing Private Confession (P) is larger than those not practicing (NP). Most of these pastors belong to group 2 of Table 27 where the same fact can be observed.

F. The Pastor's Role Definition.

The Lutheran minister has been and is called "The Pastor." Few places exist where a congregation's minister is addressed by his first or second name only; he is Pastor "So-and-So." This is the title given him by the parishioners both when speaking to him and about him. The term "pastor" means shep-herd, thus giving an image of the minister leading his "flock." However, the term "pastor" in the Lutheran ministry is a term covering all the pastor's activities. These activities are many, but can probably be divided into five groups: the pastor as priest (mediator), preacher, teacher, counselor, and administrator.[1] For information about role definitions, the pastors were therefore asked to state the one function of their ministry which they regarded to be the most important. Table 28-A presents the findings for the different bodies and groups.

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[1] According to chance, the proportion should have been 33.6 - 40.4 (P - NP).

Table 28-A

WHAT PASTORS REGARD AS THE MOST IMPORTANT FUNCTION IN THEIR MINISTRY

Group: A.NLC. Body :	ALC Pas.	AELC Pas.	Aug. Pas.	Suo. Pas.	ULCA Pas.	Free Pas.	Sub-total Pas.
Function							
priest	16	1	9	-	23	1	50
preacher	63	4	19	5	57	5	153
teacher	18	-	5	-	14	1	38
counselor	9	-	2	2	13	-	26
administrat.	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
not classif.	7	-	2	1	7	-	17
TOTAL	113	5	38	8	114	7	285

Group: B.Syn.C. Body :	Mis. Pas.	Slo. Pas.	NELC Pas.	Wis. Pas.	ELS Pas.	Sub-total Pas.	GRAND TOTAL Pas.
Function							
priest	25	2	1	-	-	28	78
preacher	75	3	3	7	4	92	245
teacher	28	2	-	3	1	34	72
counselor	9	1	-	-	-	10	36
administrat.	3	-	-	-	-	3	4
not classif.	9	-	-	5	-	14	31
TOTAL	149	8	4	15	5	181	466

---

[1] This question was discussed much with Lutheran pastors and advisors before the final distinction was accepted. Of course the terms are somewhat "loaded," and replies from the sample of pastors contained many remarks in this connection. Where a pastor refused to mark one of the five activities as the most important one, his answer was grouped as "not classified."

Distribution within the various bodies follows a similar pattern, an over-all distribution showing that more than fifty percent (53%) of the pastors regard preaching to be the most important function; the functions of priest and teacher have preference from about an equal number of pastors (17% and 15%); the role of counselor is the most important one for about eight percent of the pastors; and less than one percent regard administration to rank above other functions.

Concerning the functions of the ministry as related to the practice of Private Confession, the theory was that pastors regarding the functions of priest or counselor as most important were the ones most likely to practice Private Confession. Table 28-B shows the proportions.

Table 28-B

THE MOST IMPORTANT PASTORAL FUNCTION AS REGARDED BY PASTORS PRACTICING AND NOT PRACTICING PRIVATE CONFESSION

Most important pastoral function	P	NP	Total
Priest	41	37	78
Preacher	106	139	245
Teacher	34	38	72
Counselor	15	21	36
Administrat.,not classified	13	22	35
TOTAL	209	257	466

Assumingly the pastors who regarded the function of "priest" as the most important belong to the "liturgical movement."[1] More of these pastors practice Private Confession than those who do not. However, the difference between proportions of this group, as compared to the other, is much too small to be of significance in statistical testing. Thus we shall conclude from our sample that a pastor's regard concerning the most important function in his ministry has no bearing on his use of Private Confession.

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[1] For the liturgical movement, cf. A. C. Piepkorn, "The Protestant Worship. Revival of the Lutheran Liturgical Movement," The Liturgical Renewal of the Church (New York, 1960).

G. The Pastor's Self-Evaluation about Private Confession.

In the sections discussed thus far in this chapter we have been concerned about a number of factors, some of which have proved to be of importance for the practice of Private Confession. None of these factors, however, have been related to the pastors' own opinions and evaluations of Private Confession in its various aspects which will be presented in the next four sections.

By the pastor's self-evaluation of Private Confession is meant first, the knowledge he considers himself to have about the subject; second, his appreciation of Private Confession; and finally, his regard for the confessional books of the Lutheran Church as normative for his ministry. As in the presentation concerning seminary training,[1] the confessional view may be of importance because of the place confession and absolution have in the Book of Concord. The theory behind these factors is that the more knowledge a pastor has about Private Confession, the more he appreciates the practice of it, and the more strict he is in his confessional view, the more likely he is to use the means of Private Confession in pastoral care.

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[1] Table 22-A and 22-B.

1. Knowledge of Private Confession.

The rating in Table 29-A is arranged as a scale from excellent knowledge to no knowledge at all. The means for the different church bodies and groups are surprisingly even, all of them a little above, below, or on 3.5 which is the mean for all pastors as a whole.[1] According to the pastors, their knowledge about Private Confession averages between "good" and "fair."

There were fifty-five pastors who rated themselves as having excellent or very good knowledge of Private Confession (Table 29-A on the following page). In the test for statistical significance, these pastors comprised one group; the pastors of good knowledge a second group; those of fair knowledge a third; and the pastors who rated themselves as having poor or no knowledge of Private Confession as a fourth group. The proportion of pastors practicing and not practicing Private Confession within the four groups, is probably not surprising (Table 29-B).

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[1] The Lutheran Free Church is below the others with a mean of 4.4. However, there were only seven pastors from this group, too small a number to draw any conclusions.

Table 29-A

PASTORS' RATING OF THEIR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT PRIVATE CONFESSION

Group: A.NLC. Body :	ALC Pas.	AELC Pas.	Aug. Pas.	Suo. Pas.	ULCA Pas.	Free Pas.	Sub-total Pas.
Rating							
1.excellent	1	-	-	1	1	-	3
2.very good	14	1	3	-	12	-	30
3.good	41	2	9	4	44	1	101
4.fair	44	1	18	3	38	2	106
5.poor	13	1	7	-	16	4	41
6.none	-	-	1	-	1	-	2
Pastors	113	5	38	8	112	7	283
Score	393	17	146	25	395	31	1007
Mean	3.5	3.4	3.8	3.1	3.5	4.4	3.6

Group: B.Syn.C. Body :	Mis. Pas.	Slo. Pas.	NELC Pas.	Wis. Pas.	ELS Pas.	Sub-total Pas.	GRAND TOTAL Pas.
Rating							
1.excellent	2	-	-	1	1	4	7
2.very good	17	1	-	-	-	18	48
3.good	56	4	4	6	2	72	173
4.fair	60	3	-	6	-	69	175
5.poor	9	-	-	1	2	12	53
6.none	-	-	-	1	-	1	3
Pastors	144	8	4	15	5	176	459
Score	489	26	12	54	17	598	1605
Mean	3.4	3.2	3.0	3.6	3.4	3.4	3.5

Table 29-B

KNOWLEDGE OF PRIVATE CONFESSION AS RATED BY PASTORS PRACTICING AND NOT PRACTICING IT

Knowledge	P	NP	Total
Excellent, very good	31	24	55
Good	91	82	173
Fair	74	101	175
Poor, none	10	46	56
TOTAL	206	253	459

* $X^2 = 24.250$; $p < .001$

Among the pastors regarding themselves as having an excellent or very good knowledge of Private Confession, there are considerably more practicing than not practicing pastors. Even in the group of pastors rated "good" the number of pastors practicing Private Confession is larger than those not practicing. The situation is just the opposite among those rating themselves in the groups of "fair" and "poor/none." A statistical test proves the observation highly significant* and we can safely conclude: The more knowledge a pastor has of Private Confession, the more likely he will practice it in the care of souls.

2. Appreciation of Private Confession.

For a frank statement about the pastors' evaluation of the practice of Private Confession, this question was asked: "What is your opinion of the following statement: Private Confession ought to be practiced much more frequently than is the case at the present time."[1] The formulation might have been suggestive, but five alternatives were offered as seen in Table 30-A.

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[1] Appendix III, Qu. 17.

Table 30-A

PASTORS' OPINION OF A STATEMENT SUGGESTING THAT PRIVATE CONFESSION OUGHT TO BE PRACTICED MUCH MORE FREQUENTLY THAN IS THE CASE AT PRESENT TIME

Group: A.NLC. Body :	ALC Pas.	AELC Pas.	Aug. Pas.	Suo. Pas.	ULCA Pas.	Free Pas.	Sub-total Pas.
Opinion							
1.strongly agr.	50	1	12	8	51	1	123
2.agree	55	2	20	-	45	6	128
3.no opinion	2	-	3	-	9	-	14
4.disagree	4	2	2	-	6	-	14
5.str. disagr.	1	-	1	-	1	-	3
Pastors	112	5	38	8	112	7	282
Score	187	13	74	8	197	13	492
Mean	1.7	2.6	1.9	1.0	1.8	1.8	1.7

Group: B.Syn.C. Body :	Mis. Pas.	Slo. Pas.	NELC Pas.	Wis. Pas.	ELS Pas.	Sub-total Pas.	GRAND TOTAL Pas.
Opinion							
1.strongly agr.	63	3	2	-	1	69	192
2.agree	72	5	1	8	4	90	218
3.no opinion	6	-	-	2	-	8	22
4.disagree	7	-	-	3	-	10	24
5.str. disagr.	1	-	-	1	-	2	5
Pastors	149	8	3	14	5	179	461
Score	258	13	3	39	9	322	814
Mean	1.7	1.6	1.0	2.8	1.8	1.8	1.8

Allowing that these opinions were placed in a scale, the mean of 1.8 shows an opinion of "agree" tending a little in the direction of "strongly agree." Regardless of scale, however, the table shows that almost ninety percent of all pastors are of the opinion that Private Confession ought to be practiced much more frequently than is done at the present time. This must be kept in mind because it shows clearly that Private Confession is of more than academic interest among parish pastors.

For statistical consideration and testing, the last two groups were combined, as presented in Table 30-B.

Table 30-B

OPINIONS ABOUT A STATEMENT IN FAVOR OF PRACTICE OF PRIVATE CONFESSION BY PASTORS PRACTICING AND NOT PRACTICING IT

Opinion	P	NP	Total
Strongly agree	100	92	192
Agree	93	125	218
No opinion	7	16	23
Disagree, strongly disagree	7	21	28
TOTAL	207	254	461

* $\chi^2 = 10.893$; $p < .02$

A favorable opinion of the practice of Private Confession is apparently related to actual practice of it. The proportions between the groups are of statistical significance,* and therefore one may state: The more favorable one is to the practice of Private Confession, the more likely is the actual practice of it in pastoral care.

3. Confessional View.

The pastor's confessional view will be considered as the third and last point of his self-evaluation about Private Confession. Formulated like the question about the seminary's confessional emphasis,[1] the pastors were asked: "To what extent do you regard the confessional books (the Book of Concord or those parts of it that are accepted as confessional by your church body) as a norm or standard for your ministry?"[2]

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[1] Cf. supra, p. 307.

[2] Appendix III, Qu. 22.

Table 31-A

EXTENT OF PASTORS' REGARD FOR THE CONFESSIONAL BOOKS AS NORM OR STANDARD FOR THEIR MINISTRY

Group: A.NLC. Body :	ALC Pas.	AELC Pas.	Aug. Pas.	Suo. Pas.	ULCA Pas.	Free Pas.	Sub-total Pas.
Rating							
1.very much	64	1	21	6	50	2	144
2.much	38	1	16	2	52	5	114
3.not very mu.	10	2	1	-	10	-	23
4.not at all	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Pastors	112	5	38	8	112	7	282
Score	170	13	56	10	184	12	445
Mean	1.5	2.6	1.4	1.2	1.6	1.7	1.6

Group: B.Syn.C. Body :	Mis. Pas.	Slo. Pas.	NELC Pas.	Wis. Pas.	ELS Pas.	Sub-total Pas.	GRAND TOTAL Pas.
Rating							
1.very much	118	7	3	11	5	144	288
2.much	28	1	-	1	-	30	144
3.not very mu.	3	-	-	-	-	3	26
4.not at all	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Pastors	149	8	3	12	5	177	459
Score	183	9	3	13	5	213	658
Mean	1.2	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.2	1.4

Similar to the confessional emphasis of the seminaries, the pastors in contemporary American Lutheran parishes must be regarded as having a normative view of the confessional books. The average regard for all pastors (1.4) is closer to "very much" than to "much." The "score" of 1.2 for the pastors in the Synodical Conference is perhaps not unexpected to most Lutherans; however, the marked confessional stress of all other bodies may be surprising to some. More than ninety percent of the National Lutheran Council pastors regard the normative obligation of the Lutheran confessional books as "much" or "very much." This again confirms the confessional and conservative direction of modern Lutheranism in the United States. Again recalling the teaching on Private Confession in the Book of Concord,[1] the common confessional stress is not without influence on the practice of Private Confession.

In the statistical testing, the pastors stating "not very much" and "not at all" were combined into one group. Even then, the group was small.

Table 31-B

CONFESSIONAL STRESS BY PASTORS PRACTICING AND NOT PRACTICING PRIVATE CONFESSION

Stress	P	NP	Total
1.Very much	148	140	288
2.Much	51	93	144
3.and 4.Not v. much, not at all	9	18	27
TOTAL	208	251	459

* $\chi^2 = 11.552$; $p < .01$

Among ministers regarding the confessional books as "very much" normative, more pastors are practicing Private Confession than not. In the other groups there is a considerable difference in the opposite direction. The statistical test shows the difference between proportions to be of significance,* and consequently we can conclude: The more the confessional books of the Lutheran Church are regarded as normative by the pastors, the more the practice of Private Confession can be expected.

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[1] Cf. Part I, Chap. 1.

All three aspects of the Pastor's self-evaluation about Private Confession proved to be of statistical significance. Judging by the pastors' own statements, their general knowledge of Private Confession is not extensive. However, a number of pastors do have a knowledge of it, and these are the ones who practice Private Confession most frequently. Bearing in mind that a great majority of pastors favor a wider use of Private Confession, we cannot avoid making the following observation from our findings: Private Confession is very likely to be practiced if the pastors have knowledge of it. This knowledge is mostly a matter of education and training, but it may be gained through self-education. Where such training is received, and especially when training is received on a confessional basis, the pastors do not neglect using Private Confession in pastoral care for which there is a widespread concern among contemporary parish pastors.

H. The Pastor's Evaluation of Instruction about Private Confession in Different Congregational Situations.

The method used to obtain evaluations was quite simple. Pastors were asked[1]: "Please rate the following methods according to their importance in increasing your congregation's knowledge and practice of Private Confession. Place the number 1 in front of the most important one, the number 2 in front of the next, etc," followed by a list of five defined forms (Table 32) with space for other methods.[1]

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[1] Appendix III, Qu. 18.

By adding the rating given to each form of confession by all pastors, and dividing the sum (score) by the number of pastors having answered the question, a mean was derived for each form. In comparing these means we can then see how pastors, as a whole, evaluate the different settings for instruction in relation to each other. Table 32 lists them according to rating.

Table 32

PASTORS' RATINGS OF IMPORTANCE GIVEN TO DIFFERENT METHODS FOR INCREASING KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE OF PRIVATE CONFESSION IN THE CONGREGATIONS

Group:	A. NLC Rating	B. Syn.C. Rating	TOTAL Rating
Method			
1.Confirmation instruction	1.9	1.8	1.8
2.Instruction of adult classes	2.4	2.2	2.3
3.Preaching from the pulpit	2.7	2.8	2.8
4.Teaching in Sunday School	3.8	4.1	3.9
5.Scheduled time for hearing of Private Confession and counseling	4.3	4.3	4.3

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[1] The pastors gave seventy-three suggestions, with many similarities. The different suggestions are: Pastor's instruction in youth meetings, Bible classes, study groups and in societies; Pastor's instruction of individuals, new members and elders; Pastor offering the opportunity for Private Confession in connection with home visitation and social calls; Pastor offering the means of Private Confession when a soul shows the need and in seeing a known sinner; Pastor telling about Private Confession in connection with his announcement of Holy Communion; Private Confession ought to be required once a year; Writing about Private Confession in bulletins, pamphlets and church papers; teaching of Private Confession in parochial schools; Parents teaching their children the value and importance of Private Confession, example given by practice of Pastor and others.

The list clearly shows that, as a whole, the pastors prefer stressing instruction in confirmation classes. This is followed by teaching it in adult classes and using Private Confession as a topic in sermons. There is a definite gap on the Sunday School level and in scheduling time for hearing Private Confession. Because these two methods are rated below the others does not mean they are not regarded as important or without influence on the practice of Private Confession. As has previously been shown,[1] the instruction of Private Confession in Sunday School is statistically significant for the practice of it. The present table is shown only to indicate where the pastors feel instruction should primarily be given. It is not an object for statistical tests[2]; neither is there a defined theory behind it except for the importance of instruction.

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[1] Cf. supra, pp. 290ff.

[2] The statistician at the Menninger Foundation, Topeka, Kansas, Lolafaye Coyne, writes in this connection: "Analysis of the difference between means for the groups practicing (P) and not practicing (NP) Private Confession on each of the categories taken separately of Questions 16, 18, and 19 /In the study the findings on these questions are presented in tables 32, 33, and 36/ is not possible since the categories are contingent upon each other, i.e., given a certain category a rank of 1 automatically precludes any other category from getting that rank; thus high ranks for three of the categories force low ranks for the others. Therefore separate statistical tests of each category are not independent. An attempt to compare the two groups on all the categories taken together by a statistical test such as the analogies of variance of repeated measurements on independent groups fails since the data are only in ranks rather than in some kind of interval or ratio scale as is necessary to meet the assumptions for such a test. What is needed for this case is a non-parametric analogue of the above mentioned parametric analysis of variance. This type of non-parametric model does not exist."

I. The Pastor's Evaluation of Situations for Hearing Private Confession.

1. Place of Hearing.

There are immediately at least six different places to be considered as possible locations for the hearing of Private Confession (cf. Table 33). The pastors were asked to rate them according to their preference, and space was allowed for the mention of additional locations.[1] The method to find the rating was the same as outlined above, and resulted in the following list:

Table 33

PASTOR'S RATING OF PREFERENCE FOR HEARING PRIVATE CONFESSION

Group:	A. NLC Rating	B. Syn.C. Rating	TOTAL Rating
Place for hearing			
1. Pastor's office	2.0	2.0	2.0
2. Sacristy	2.8	2.6	2.8
3. Church	2.7	3.2	2.9
4. Chapel	3.4	3.5	3.4
5. Home of the parishioner	4.1	3.7	3.9
6. Pastor's home	5.1	4.9	5.0

The National Lutheran Council pastors prefer the church to the sacristy, but this does not change the picture: Private Confession should be conducted somewhere in the church buildings if possible. The reasons behind this probably are that Private Confession is a special pastoral act for which the church buildings are the most natural place, and that the church buildings assure privacy.

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[1] Cf. Appendis III, Qu. 19. Ten pastors suggested hospitals or institutions. Sixteen pastors stressed that the place was unimportant. Private Confession could be made any place where complete privacy is certain,whether it be in the house of friends, in a car, on a sidewalk or street, the place of business, at a social gathering, a park-bench, or any of the places mentioned in the table. One pastor wanted to have the presence of one witness in conducting Private Confession. One pastor recommended the use of "The Confessional" (like the practice of the Roman Catholic Church).

2. Methods of Hearing Private Confession.

Here the term method refers to the pastor's attitude and type of counseling, is he directive or non-directive, etc. Five methods were formulated ranging from strictly listening to an authoritarian method. The theory behind this was that Private Confession was more likely practiced by pastors who preferred the directive method. Every pastor was asked to check one of the groups as the method he preferred using. He might use different methods depending on the situation, but no question was asked in this respect. In Table 34-A and B the methods are listed from A to E, referring to these definitions:

A. Merely listening with few or no comments.
B. Mostly listening, but asking questions to help the person to a better understanding of his problems.
C. Listening and asking questions, but also giving advice on the problems.
D. Listening and as a pastor telling the person what to do on the basis of his experience and knowledge.
E. Listening and ordering the person as to what to do based upon the Bible and Lutheran doctrines.

Table 34-A

METHODS PREFERRED BY PASTORS IN THE HEARING OF PRIVATE CONFESSION

Group: A.NLC. Body :	ALC Pas.	AELC Pas.	Aug. Pas.	Suo. Pas.	ULCA Pas.	Free Pas.	Sub-total Pas.
Method							
A	8	-	3	-	8	1	20
B	60	2	26	2	48	3	141
C	21	1	5	3	27	2	59
D	6	1	3	1	11	1	23
E	14	1	1	2	11	-	29
Pastors	109	5	38	8	105	7	272

Group: B.Syn.C. Body :	Mis. Pas.	Slo. Pas.	NELC Pas.	Wis. Pas.	ELS Pas.	Sub-total Pas.	GRAND TOTAL Pas.
Method							
A	6	-	-	-	-	6	26
B	62	3	2	3	-	70	211
C	40	4	-	4	1	49	108
D	11	1	-	2	2	16	39
E	27	-	1	3	2	33	62
Pastors	146	8	3	12	5	174	446

The table shows that most of these pastors preferred either listening and asking questions to help the confessee to a better understanding of his problems, or of giving advice in addition. However, there is quite a large group who favor authoritarian methods, and a small group preferring a passive attitude.

Maintaining the five groups, but dividing each group into pastors practicing and not practicing Private Confession, Table 34-B resulted:

Table 34-B

METHODS PREFERRED IN HEARING OF PRIVATE CONFESSION BY PASTORS PRACTICING AND NOT PRACTICING PRIVATE CONFESSION

Method of hearing	P	NP	Total
A (listening with few comments)	7	19	26
B (listening and asking)	101	110	211
C (listening, asking, advising)	51	57	108
D (listening and telling)	12	27	39
E (listening and ordering)	34	28	62
TOTAL	205	241	446

* $\chi^2 = 9.807; \ p < .05$

In the last group there is a larger number practicing Private Confession than not. This group may be characterized as the authoritarian one. Also the second group has a larger proportion of pastors practicing Private Confession than expected by chance,[1] and by testing the table we find the proportions to be of statistical significance.* If the five methods of counseling are regarded as a scale, we see that practice of Private Confession is not related to degree of authoritarian approach. It is more likely to be practiced, on the one hand, by pastors using a very directive method based on Bible and Lutheran doctrines, and on the other hand, by pastors who are non-directive and client-centered in their approach. Why this is so is not easy to explain because there is seemingly a contradiction. One may understand the finding to indicate two different types of Private Confession, the one rather "ritualistic" and the other "democratic." However, another interpretation is probably better: The matter of method is secondary. Primarily the practice of Private Confession is a matter of pastoral concern, and pastors having this concern are found mostly among the "old-fashioned" authoritarian ones and among the more "modern" ones where the client-centered method is strongly represented today.

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[1] Expected by chance: 97-114 (P-NP).

3. Resentment.

When a parishioner has confessed his sins to the pastor, the confessee may later feel resentment against him. This may block opportunities for future pastoral care and also decrease the practice of Private Confession. For first hand information concerning the extent to which resentment is created, one should ask the persons who confessed to their pastor. However, the pastor may also have certain feelings on the problem of resentment. It was believed that this information was of common interest, and the results are stated for the different bodies as well as for the particular groups.

The question to the pastors was stated in general terms: "Do you feel that persons who have confessed their sins to you later resent the fact that you know 'too much' about them?"[1] Four possibilities from which to choose were offered (Table 35-A).

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[1] Appendix III, Qu. 24.

Table 35-A

PASTORS' FEELING OF RESENTMENT FROM PERSONS WHO HAVE CONFESSED THEIR SINS TO THEM

Group: A.NLC. Body :	ALC Pas.	AELC Pas.	Aug. Pas.	Suo. Pas.	ULCA Pas.	Free Pas.	Sub-total Pas.
Resentment from							
1.nobody	47	3	11	6	43	3	113
2.a very few	41	1	16	2	48	4	112
3.some	17	-	9	-	16	-	42
4.many	1	-	-	-	1	-	2
Pastors	106	4	36	8	108	7	269
Score	184	5	70	10	191	11	471
Mean	1.7	1.2	1.9	1.2	1.8	1.6	1.8

Group: B.Syn.C. Body :	Mis. Pas.	Slo. Pas.	NELC Pas.	Wis. Pas.	ELS Pas.	Sub-total Pas.	GRAND TOTAL Pas.
Resentment from							
1.nobody	80	2	1	9	2	94	207
2.a very few	48	5	3	3	2	61	173
3.some	13	-	-	-	1	14	56
4.many	1	-	-	-	-	1	3
Pastors	142	7	4	12	5	170	439
Score	219	12	7	15	9	262	732
Mean	1.5	1.7	1.8	1.2	1.8	1.5	1.7

The mean for all pastors of 1.7 indicates that resentment from parishioners as felt by the pastors is small; slightly higher for the National Lutheran Council pastors (1.8) than for the pastors from the Synodical Conference (1.5). However, the table also shows that a number of pastors (13%) feel some or many people do resent them after confessing. For the pastors practicing and not practicing Private Confession, Table 35-B presents the proportions.

Table 35-B

RESENTMENT FROM CONFESSEE AS FELT BY PASTORS PRACTICING AND NOT PRACTICING PRIVATE CONFESSION

Resentment from	P	NP	Total
1. nobody	90	117	207
2. a very few	88	85	173
3. and 4. some, and many	24	35	59
TOTAL	202	237	439

There are more pastors practicing Private Confession than not in the group feeling that a very few persons show resentment. However, the difference between proportions is of no statistical significance. Consequently the result is that pastors feeling resentment from people having confessed to them seemed to be of no significance for the number of pastors practicing or not practicing Private Confession. Of course, this finding does not prove that resentment is without significance in the practice of Private Confession. There may be many people who do not confess sins to their own pastor because they do not want him "to know them." As a hypothesis in this connection it is stated: Quite a few parishioners feel it easier to confess their sins to an anonymous pastor, i.e., to a pastor outside their own congregation. The present research had no way of getting information to test this hypothesis, but the problem is certainly not unimportant.

K. Private Confession and Other Forms of Confession.

Early in this study,[1] and also in the questionnaire[2] a distinction was made between six forms of confession of sins: (a) Public Confession, i.e., confession of sins by the whole congregation in connection with a service, followed by the minister's declared absolution; (b) An individual's confession in public, i.e., confession of sins by a member before the entire congregation or a portion of it; (c) Confession of sins to God alone; (d) Confession of sins by a person to another person he has offended; (e) An individual's confession of sins while being counseled without formal absolution; (f) Private Confession, i.e., confession of sins by one man to another (usually the pastor) followed by the other's declared absolution.

A pastor has, of course, no way of knowing the frequency with which his parishioners confess their sins to God alone. As for the frequency of confession among his parishioners to other persons they have offended, the pastor also has no way of knowing. He can, however, give information about the other forms because he is usually involved. The last of the forms mentioned above is the topic of our study, and many tables have been presented.in this connection. Public Confession, the first form, had to be omitted because of bias in the formulation.[3] The second and the fifth forms remain, an individual's confession of sins in public and while being counseled. Our theory is that when high frequencies of these confessions are found, the practice of Private Confession is more likely to be expected. The forms and their relation to the practice of Private Confession will be discussed below.

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[1] Cf. supra, p. 2.

[2] Cf. Appendix III.

[3] Cf. supra, p. 283, note 2.

Even if the pastor is unable to give information concerning all six forms of confession, he may be able to evaluate them in relation to each other. This latter concern is the first aspect presented in this section.

1. The Pastor's Evaluation of Private Confession as Compared to Other Forms of Confession.

The ministers were asked: "Please rate the forms of confession according to the importance you attach to the six commonly known forms. Place the number 1 in front of the most important one, the number 2 in front of the next, etc."[1] A list of the six forms as mentioned above followed. Using the same method as for Tables 32 and 33, Table 36 resulted. From an historical point of view, the rating is interesting (see Table 36, next page). Public Confession, which is a form of confession introduced into the Church rather late,[2] is rated second. However, the rating can be understood in light of the fact that most pastors did not take Public Confession to mean a special service as preparatory to Holy Communion, but rather a general confession of sins which is a part of

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[1] Appendix III, Qu. 16.

[2] Cf. *supra*, pp. 116f.

Table 36

PASTORS' RATING OF SIX DIFFERENT FORMS OF CONFESSION WHEN SEEN IN RELATION TO EACH OTHER

Group:	A.NLC Rating	B.Syn.C. Rating	TOTAL Rating
Form			
1. Confession of sins to God alone	2.0	1.7	1.9
2. Public Confession	3.0	3.0	3.0
3. Confession of sins by one person to another he has offended	3.2	3.0	3.1
4. Private Confession	3.4	3.6	3.5
5. An individual's confession of sins while being counseled	4.0	4.3	4.1
6. An individual's confession of sins in public	5.2	5.3	5.3

every church service. What is more remarkable is the rating given to an individual's confession of sins in public, i.e., before the entire congregation or a part of it. This was the commonly practiced form of confession in the early church,[1] and was a definite part of church discipline. It was practiced to a decreasing extent during the Middle Ages and the Reformation. It now rates the lowest of the six forms.

Private Confession rates fourth. Theologically this seems logical. It is only natural that confession of sins to God alone would rate first. God is the one who forgives whether or not confession is made to some other person. The pastors' understanding of Public Confession explains the second rating. No Lutheran church service can be conducted without general confession. Ranking third is the direct confession of a person to the one he has offended. This is apparently important both because Luther emphasizes this as being compulsory in the life of a Christian,[2] and because of the Biblical emphasis on reconciliation at the human level. Private Confession, which is not commanded in the Bible, is placed before counseling. From a Lutheran understanding counseling and Private Confession are related, the former frequently used before absolution is declared. The rating of number five and six to counseling and an individual's confession of sins in public does not mean they are necessarily regarded as unimportant. They are, in fact, important for the practice of Private Confession as our discussion will show.

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[1] Cf. supra, pp. 17-19.

[2] Cf. supra, p. 45.

2. Confession of Sins in a Counseling Situation.

Most pastors have a number of counseling situations throughout the year. It may be marriage counseling, vocational counseling, or counseling concerned with any problem in the parishioners' lives; it may also be counseling involving the problems of sin and guilt. These last situations are our concern; they differ from Private Confession since no formal absolution is declared.

Since the acts of confession of sins in a counseling situation and Private Confession are related, the frequency of this kind of counseling is of interest. Table 37-A presents the average practice of the different bodies and groups.

Table 37-A

ANNUAL FREQUENCY OF CONFESSION IN A PASTORAL COUNSELING SITUATION

Group:	A.NLC.						Sub-total
Body :	ALC	AELC	Aug.	Suo.	ULCA	Free	
Pastors	110	4	34	8	108	7	271
Confessions	1603	14	316	67	1451	38	3489
Mean	14.6	3.5	9.3	8.4	13.4	5.4	12.9

(Continued on next page)

Group:	B.Syn.C.						
Body :	Mis.	Slo.	NELC	Wis.	ELS	Sub-total	GRAND TOTAL
Pastors	143	7	3	12	5	170	441
Confessions	2099	45	7	60	72	2283	5772
Mean	14.7	6.4	2.3	5.0	14.4	13.4	13.1

The average for the pastors is about thirteen cases a year in which confession of sins is included in the counseling situation. Some pastors, of course, have a much larger number of cases, some less (The Private Confession situations as well as other kinds of counseling are not included in Table 37-A).

By dividing the pastors in four comparable groups according to frequency of counseling situations, the following table resulted.

Table 37-B

ANNUAL FREQUENCY OF CONFESSION OF SINS IN COUNSELING AS CONDUCTED BY PASTORS PRACTICING AND NOT PRACTICING PRIVATE CONFESSION

Frequency	P	NP	Total
0-1 time	23	83	106
2-4 times	44	58	102
5-10 times	63	57	120
more than 10 times	74	38	112
TOTAL	204	236	440

* $\chi^2 = 45.485$; $p < .001$

The table shows a strong relationship between Private Confession and frequency of counseling. A statistical test proves the difference between the proportions to be extremely significant.* There is no doubt: The more a pastor is involved in counseling where confession of sins takes place, the more likely he is to practice Private Confession.

3. An Individual's Confession of Sins in Public.

Confession of one's sins before the entire congregation is part of church discipline. Even if the practice has strong traditional roots, one might have expected this kind of confession to be nearly forgotten. It proved to be wrong. Three hundred sixty-eight ministers (86%) reported never to have had experience of an individual's confession of sins in public during the year, but fifty-nine pastors (14%) reported almost three hundred cases (288). Thus, to a limited degree, the practice still remains, almost equally divided among the different church bodies and groups (an average of 0.7 cases reported by the National Lutheran Council pastors, 0.6 cases by the pastors from the Synodical Conference).

For testing the possible significance for the practice of Private Confession, Table 38 is presented.

Table 38

INDIVIDUAL'S CONFESSION OF SINS IN PUBLIC AS REPORTED BY PASTORS PRACTICING AND NOT PRACTICING PRIVATE CONFESSION

Cases of individual's confession of sins in public.	P	NP	Total
Some	35	24	59
None	156	212	368
TOTAL	191	236	427

* $\chi^2 = 5.884$; $p < .02$

Among the pastors having experience with this kind of confession, there are more practicing Private Confession than not. For the other group the proportion is the opposite. A statistical test shows the difference of proportions to be significant;*

this enables us to state that the more an individual practices confession of sins in the congregation, the more likely it is that the pastor practices Private Confession.

Thus we find that both confession of sins within a counseling situation and an individual's confession of sins in public are related to the practice of Private Confession. The more frequently the other forms of confession are practiced, the more likely Private Confession will be used. As for the relationship between confession of sins in the counseling situation and Private Confession, one has reason to believe that this proved relationship is an expression of a pastoral concern, probably shown mainly by pastors using a client-centered method. We make the latter interpretation because we may assume that a relationship of confession of sins in public and Private Confession is usually found among pastors who favor a strict authoritarian method (Cf. Table 34-B).

L. The Pastor's Own Practice of Private Confession.

One of the last variables assumed to affect the pastor's practice of Private Confession within his congregation was the use he personally made of Private Confession, i.e., if he personally became the confessee. The formulation of the question was: "How often did you use Private Confession yourself (for example to another pastor) during the last year?"[1] With the definition of Private Confession as given on the first page of the questionnaire, the pastors were to understand the situation conversely to their usual practice in the congregation; they were personally confessing to another person and hearing the declared absolution from him. The hypothesis behind this variable was that the pastors being confessees would also more likely be confessors.

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[1] Appendix III, Qu. 15.

Four hundred thirty-nine pastors answered this question. Table 39-A presents the findings. As can be seen, more than three hundred pastors (71%) never used Private Confession themselves, the percentages being about seventy-four for the National Lutheran Council pastors, and about sixty-six for the Synodical Conference group. Positively the figures also tell that one hundred twenty-seven pastors (29%) did see another person (usually another pastor), confessed sins to him and were absolved. About half of these did this once during the year, the other half twice or more times.

Table 39-A

ANNUAL FREQUENCY OF PASTORS' OWN USE OF PRIVATE CONFESSION

Group: A.NLC. Body :	ALC Pas.	AELC Pas.	Aug. Pas.	Suo. Pas.	ULCA Pas.	Free Pas.	Sub-total Pas.
Frequ.							
0	81	4	23	3	84	4	199
1	9	-	5	2	12	1	29
2	5	-	3	2	7	-	17
3	2	-	-	1	3	1	7
4	3	1	2	-	1	-	7
5	1	-	-	-	2	-	3
6	1	-	-	-	1	-	2
7	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
8	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
10/more*	1	-	-	-	1	-	2
Pastors	103	5	34	8	112	6	268
Pr. Con.	58	4	26	9	73	4	174
Mean	0.6	0.8	0.8	1.1	0.6	0.7	0.6

* In the total of Pr. Con., the frequency is regarded as 10

(Continued on next page)

Table 39-A (cont)

Group:	B.Syn.C.						
Body :	Mis. Pas.	Slo. Pas.	NELC Pas.	Wis. Pas.	ELS Pas.	Sub-total Pas.	GRAND TOTAL Pas.
Frequ.							
0	92	5	3	9	4	113	312
1	19	1	-	1	1	22	51
2	18	-	1	-	-	19	36
3	3	-	-	1	-	4	11
4	5	1	-	-	-	6	13
5	4	-	-	-	-	4	7
6	1	-	-	-	-	1	3
7	1	-	-	-	-	1	2
8	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
10/more	1	-	-	-	-	1	3
Pastors	144	7	4	11	5	171	439
Pr. Con.	127	5	2	4	1	139	313
Mean	0.9	0.7	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.8	0.7

Combining into one group all pastors using Private Confession personally, into another group all pastors not using Private Confession, and finally by dividing these groups into pastors practicing (P) and not practicing (NP) Private Confession in their congregations, the following table resulted:

Table 39-B
PASTORS' PERSONAL USE OF PRIVATE CONFESSION AS RELATED TO THEIR PRACTICE AND NOT PRACTICE OF IT IN PASTORAL CARE

Pastor's own use	P	NP	Total
Some personal use	85	42	127
No personal use	118	194	312
TOTAL	203	236	439

* $\chi^2 = 30.329$; $p < .001$

The proportions here are striking. Among the pastors personally confessing to another and receiving declared absolution, almost twice as many practiced Private Confession in their congregations as compared to those not practicing. Among the pastors not personally using Private Confession, the number of those practicing it in the parishes is much less than the number of pastors not practicing it. The statistical test applied to the difference between proportions proved it to be highly significant (see * on preceding page). Consequently a conclusion can be made: Pastors personally using Private Confession are much more likely to also practice it in their congregations.

The interpretation of this fact gives several considerations among which only two shall be mentioned as hypotheses: (1) The pastor using Private Confession himself believes in the value of it and also makes an effort to give this belief to his congregation; (2) The pastor using Private Confession himself has experienced the comfort of it and desires this comfort to be available for his parishioners.

M. The Pastor and Psychology.

Generally speaking, psychology has a large influence in contemporary American life. Theological instruction has taken this into account by including seminary courses on the various psychological aspects of the ministry. There is great interest shown by present and future ministers in pastoral clinical training courses conducted in hospitals and institutions. A large number of books and articles have been written in this area, especially since the last World War.[1]

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[1] For literature, cf. especially the annual January editions of Pastoral Psychology (Great Neck, New York).

1. The Pastor's Attitude Toward Psychology.

Concerning the pastors' training in psychology and its influence on the practice of Private Confession, the hypothesis was admittedly vague. It was believed that psychological insight might cause a pastor to favor Private Confession, but it could also have the reverse effect. Thus the hypothesis was somewhat open and undefined. Assuming that psychological training had some influence either positively or negatively, this question was asked: "To what degree do you favor using the teachings of psychology in the conducting of Private Confession?"[1] The pastor could state his opinion by marking "very much," "much," "not very much," or "not at all."

Among the schools of psychology there are many which hold opposing opinions and contradictory viewpoints. Thus the pastor's answer is largely dependent upon his understanding of psychology. Because of the generality of the question, a number of pastors made good remarks in this connection. However, we believe that the findings are of some value as an expression of Lutheran pastors' attitude toward modern psychology, and are therefore presenting the descriptive Table 40-A.

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[1] Appendix III, Qu. 25.

Table 40-A

DEGREE OF FAVOR IN USING THE TEACHINGS OF PSYCHOLOGY IN THE CONDUCTING OF PRIVATE CONFESSION AS EXPRESSED BY PASTORS FROM DIFFERENT BODIES AND GROUPS

Group: A.NLC. Body :	ALC Pas.	AELC Pas.	Aug. Pas.	Suo. Pas.	ULCA Pas.	Free Pas.	Sub-total Pas.
Degree of favor							
1.very much	17	1	5	1	14	-	38
2.much	59	2	17	4	55	3	140
3.not very much	33	2	11	3	38	4	91
4.not at all	1	-	2	-	1	-	4
Pastors	110	5	35	8	108	7	273
Score	238	11	80	18	242	18	607
Mean	2.2	2.2	2.3	2.2	2.2	2.6	2.2

Group: B.Syn.C. Body :	Mis. Pas.	Slo. Pas.	NELC Pas.	Wis. Pas.	ELS Pas.	Sub-total Pas.	GRAND TOTAL Pas.
Degree of favor							
1.very much	24	1	-	1	-	26	64
2.much	75	4	2	3	2	86	226
3.not very much	41	2	2	7	2	54	145
4.not at all	6	-	-	1	-	7	11
Pastors	146	7	4	12	4	173	446
Score	321	15	10	32	10	388	995
Mean	2.2	2.1	2.5	2.7	2.5	2.2	2.2

The means for the different bodies are almost the same. In regarding the degrees of favor as a scale, a mean of 2.2 shows that the pastors generally are closer to "much" in favor of psychology than to "not very much." If an interpretation could be offered, it would probably state that the Lutheran pastors in the United States have quite a favorable attitude toward psychology, but with some reservations.

By making the usual grouping of pastors practicing and not practicing Private Confession, Table 40-B results:

Table 40-B

DEGREE OF FAVOR IN USING THE TEACHINGS OF PSYCHOLOGY IN THE CONDUCTING OF PRIVATE CONFESSION AS EXPRESSED BY PASTORS PRACTICING AND NOT PRACTICING IT

Degree of favor	P	NP	Total
1. Very much	30	34	64
2. Much	111	115	226
3. and 4. Not very much/not at all	63	93	156
TOTAL	204	242	446

Proportionately there are more pastors practicing Private Confession in the first group than in the two other. However, the difference is not of statistical significance so the conclusion must be: the degree of the pastors' favor in using the teaching of psychology in the conducting of Private Confession apparently does not influence the practice of it.

Several additional questions were asked in the questionnaire concerning the pastor's attitude toward psychology.[1] The five statements about which the pastors were asked to give their opinion, were the following:

1. The pastor should study psychology and adopt in his work any ideas that are new.
2. The pastor should study psychology and adopt those methods which are useful in his work.
3. The pastor should study psychology but accept only those ideas which agree with the Bible and the doctrine of the church.
4. The pastor should study psychology so that he can be a well informed person.
5. The pastor should study psychology so that he can criticize its non-Christian ideas.

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[1] Appendix III, Questions 26-30.

The statements were intended to represent a scale ranging from a very positive to a very negative viewpoint. The pastor could choose one of the five opinions with which he most nearly agreed. Table 41 presents the opinions grouping all the pastors together.[1]

Table 41

PASTORS' OPINION ABOUT DIFFERENT STATEMENTS FOR REASON TO STUDY PSYCHOLOGY

Opinion	St.1*	St.2*	St.3*	St.4*	St.5*
1. Strongly agree	15	126	204	95	17
2. Agree	85	307	196	235	112
3. No opinion	47	10	24	38	41
4. Disagree	213	12	28	74	214
5. Strongly disagree	79	4	5	17	73
Sum pastors	439	459	457	459	457
Score	1566	838	805	1060	1585
Mean	3.6	1.8	1.8	2.3	3.5

* Refers to the five statements on previous page.

The scores and means refer to the opinions as a scale. Granting this is justified, the table shows that the pastors generally "agree" (a slight tendency to "strongly agree") with two statements: "adopt those methods which are useful in his work," and "accept those ideas which agree with the Bible and the doctrines of the church." They also agree (with a strong tendency in the negative direction) with the statement that he should study psychology for the sake of being a "well informed person." The first and the last statements favor the score of "disagree," thus a negative reason for psychological study.

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[1] Tables for the different bodies and groups are omitted because no statistical testing and analysis were conducted on these tables. Table 41 is presented because it has some significance for the final considerations in this study.

Without venturing any conclusions from this table, it may suggest that the results seem to fit the interpretation offered above: The Lutheran pastors in the United States have quite a favorable attitude toward psychology, but with some reservations.

2. Pastoral Clinical Training.

The extent of pastoral clinical training is a new phenomenon in American theological education.[1] Now adopted as a part of the curriculum in several seminaries, with a large attendance of ministers, pastoral clinical training gives the participants an opportunity to work (for a period of three or more months) under the supervision of a chaplain especially trained in this field. This training includes teaching in practical and theoretical psychology. Thus there is a connection between clinical pastoral training and the practice of Private Confession in the care of souls.

In Table 42 there are three groups of pastors: those with no clinical training, those with one period of training (three months), and those with two or more periods of training. Each group is divided into pastors practicing (P) and not practicing (NP) Private Confession.

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[1] For the history of Pastoral Clinical Training, see especially: Clinical Education For the Pastoral Ministry, ed. by Ernest E. Bruder and Marian L. Barb (Published by the Advisory Committee on Clinical Pastoral Education, 1958).

Table 42

EXTENT OF PASTORAL CLINICAL TRAINING FOR PASTORS PRACTICING AND NOT PRACTICING PRIVATE CONFESSION

Periods	P	NP	Total
None	131	177	308
One period	45	38	83
Two or more periods	29	38	67
TOTAL	205	253	458

We observe that there are more pastors practicing Private Confession than not in the group having had one period of clinical training. However, the difference between proportions is of no statistical significance, and therefore we may state that pastoral clinical training seemingly has no influence on the numbers of pastors practicing Private Confession.

The search for a relationship between psychological insight and the practice of Private Confession was in vain. The reason could be that no specific definition was offered for the term "psychology," thus making both questions and answers ambiguous. A concentration on, for example, the Freudian school of psychology might have given other results. Research from such a detailed viewpoint was considered beyond the scope of the present study, but it deserves careful future consideration.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

A. Practice of Private Confession in General.

Based on this survey, the practice of Private Confession is maintained by nearly eighty percent of American Lutheran parish pastors. Included in this percentage are also pastors practicing Private Confession only in connection with Communion of the Sick. The annual frequency of practice shows a great variety from pastors not using it or on just a single occasion, to pastors hearing more than one hundred confessions annually. Average practice for all ministers is about twenty-five cases of Private Confession a year.

Private Confession in connection with Communion of the Sick accounts for almost eighty percent of all cases. This form of Private Confession is usually a prescribed one, being a part of the ritual for the Order of Communion of the Sick. The confessee may choose to personalize his confession of sins, but the written order is commonly followed. The pastor may also regard Private Confession in connection with Communion of the Sick to be the situational form of Public Confession by the congregation preceding Holy Communion. Thus this practice of Private Confession cannot be considered an expression of a concern to offer an opportunity for personal, free confession of sin.

This concern is, however, found among pastors practicing Private Confession in connection with announcement for Holy Communion or purely as a pastoral act. No rites are given; consequently the practice of confession of sins and absolution shows that Private Confession is a means in the care of souls. The confessee uses his own words in confessing, and the pastor declares absolution.

The practice of the non-described Private Confession was the object of our interest. This kind of Private Confession is practiced by forty-five percent of the parish pastors. In the present study they are regarded as "Pastors Practicing Private Confession"; all other pastors as "Pastors Not Practicing Private Confession."

B. Factors Which Do Not Influence the Practice of Private Confession.

In our sample the following observation was made: The congregation's location in the United States proved to be of no importance for the practice of Private Confession. The same is true of its location in town, city, rural, or suburban areas. Furthermore the size of the congregation, as well as its ethnic background were without significance. The number of informal services during the year could not be found to have any bearing on the practice of Private Confession.

The pastor's ethnic background and place of rearing are without influence on his later use of Private Confession. Without significance also are his age, year of ordination, his theological position, and the supervised education he had in pastoral clinical training. His opinion as to his most important role as pastor, resentment against him by the confessee, and the extent to which he utilizes the teachings of psychology in conducting Private Confession, could not be found to have any influence on the practice of Private Confession.

C. Factors Which Do Influence the Practice of Private Confession.

Sixteen factors were found to have importance in the practice of Private Confession. Listed are four groups according to their statistical significance, they are[1]:

1.[2] Instruction in confirmation classes;
Instruction in adult classes:
Instruction in Sunday School;
Instruction in sermons;
The pastor's knowledge of Private Confession;
His own practice of Private Confession;
His practice of pastoral counseling;
His denominational affiliation.

2.[3] Instruction to teachers in the congregation;
Stress of confession and absolution in seminary training;
The pastor's view of the Lutheran confessional books as normative;
The seminary's view of the Lutheran confessional books as normative.

3.[4] The pastor's opinion about the need for a more frequent use of Private Confession;
The practice of individuals' confession of sins in public.

4.[5] Frequency of Holy Communion services in the congregation;
Methods in hearing of Private Confession (Authoritative and client-centered).

Further, there are two factors which show a trend toward significance[6]: the emphasis of confession and absolution in pastoral care training during the seminary years, and the age of a congregation (more practice in younger congregations).

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[1] The higher the score, the more likely the practice of Private Confession.

[2] $p < .001$.

[3] $p < .01$.

[4] $p < .02$.

[5] $p < .05$.

[6] $p < .10$.

D. The Hypothesis.

The hypothesis for the present study was: "The degree to which Private Confession is practiced in American Lutheranism is related to denominational, congregational, and ministerial factors." From the hypothesis, several sub-hypotheses were stated, divided according to these three groups of factors.

The first part of the hypothesis, denominational factors, was donfirmed so far as we by "denominational" think of three larger sections in American Lutheranism, namely the Synodical Conference, the American Lutheran Church (including the Lutheran Free Church), and the future Lutheran Church of America (the proposed merger of ULCA, Aug., AELC, and Suomi). Within these three sections the practice of Private Confession was quite similar. However, the Synodical Conference pastors have a wider practice of Private Confession than the others.

The second part, congregational factors, proved to be confirmed concerning the frequency of instruction about Private Confession in different congregational situations. As for the worship services used by the congregation, the frequency of Holy Communion services was significant; of informal services insignificant. The congregations' location and size as well as degree of assimilation into American culture were not significant except for the trend connected with the age of the congregations.

The last part of the hypothesis, ministerial factors, showed the pastor's education and self-evaluation of Private Confession to be statistically significant, as was his method of hearing Private Confession. For the other sub-hypotheses of ministerial factors, none could be found to hold significance for the practice of Private Confession. Thus the original hypothesis was confirmed to the extent that some denominational, congregational, and ministerial factors are related to the practice of Private Confession.

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

Following each main section of this study, a summary is presented with detailed conclusions drawn from the specific parts. In our final conclusions we shall therefore state the findings in general terms, and discuss the implication of these findings for the future as far as Private Confession is concerned.

A. Doctrine, History, and Practice of Private Confession.

1) Private Confession is confession of sins made by one man to another, followed by the other's declared absolution. Its doctrine and practice are frequently mentioned both in the Lutheran confessional books and in Luther's writings. Since it is not commanded in the Scriptures, Private Confession cannot be regarded as a sacrament. It is primarily a means in the care of souls by which the declared words of absolution are given for the comfort of the sinner. When the confessor absolves a person, his declared absolution is considered as valid as though given by God himself. Yet the absolution can only be accepted by the confessee in faith, there is no magic involved, neither is any merit gained by the confessing of sins. The practice of Private Confession is voluntary. No man has to go to Private Confession, and when he does, he is to confess only what troubles his conscience, nothing more.

By its nature, absolution is offered in the Word of God. Thus the absolution offered in Private Confession is identical to that offered in sermons, in teaching, in the Sacraments, and in General or Public Confession in the church. However, the absolution of Private Confession is applied directly to one specific sinner. It is God's forgiveness offered to one repentant man. Private Confession is entirely in the service of the Gospel, not the Law.

2) The history of Private Confession as a means in the care of souls has been rather confusing. As early as the Reformation it was combined with examination, i.e., a compulsory act prior to Holy Communion in which the pastor examined the confessee's knowledge and understanding of Christianity, especially Luther's Small Catechism. Combined with examination, Private Confession became an act of church discipline more than a means in pastoral care. As a whole, Pietism was greatly opposed to this kind of practice, with the result that Private Confession was decreasingly practiced. There were several attempts to revive Private Confession, but without widespread success.

Originating in Europe, American Lutheranism at first held to the same patterns as did the home countries. Private Confession existed and remained among Lutherans of this country, but was never commonly practiced either by pastors or by parishioners. One exception was the practice of Private Confession in connection with Communion of the Sick, but this practice usually followed a written order and was somewhat "ritualistic." Still it is assumed that some knowledge of Private Confession has been common in American Lutheranism because of the prominence of Luther's Small Catechism in the entire history of Lutheran churches. This book has always been basic in religious instruction among Lutherans, and Luther's section on Confession has been included in almost all editions. Quite a few catechisms have also included the section on The Office of the Keys, which stresses the practice and doctrine of Private Confession. The confessional development and strong conservative tendency in American Lutheranism have also played a part in maintaining Private Confession. This does not mean that Private Confession has been practiced frequently in the United States at any time, but that practice and teaching have never been completely neglected.

3) The practice of Private Confession in contemporary American Lutheranism is both common and rather frequent when Private Confession is included as a part of the order for Communion of the Sick. However, to what extent a "free" confession of sins is used in this latter ritual is not known. Presumably, the written order is followed, and, if so, Communion of the Sick is mainly an extended service of Holy Communion in the congregation, by circumstances which require it to be given in the home of the sick parishioner. When Private Confession is practiced entirely as a means in pastoral care, less than half of the parish pastors use it. The frequency is small. This fact confirms the assumption that Private Confession has not been practiced much in American Lutheran churches, but also that it has been maintained to a certain extent.

The common opinion among parish pastors is that Private Confession should be practiced much more than it is at the present time. In this respect there is a desire and need among contemporary pastors which seemingly is quite opposite from the attitude of some generations ago. One may conclude that the common concern is an expression of the felt need for pastoral care as such and for Private Confession as a valuable means in pastoral care.

Our study clearly showed where the emphasis must be placed if a more widespread practice of Private Confession should be expected. The frequency of Holy Communion services, methods of hearing Private Confession, and methods of church discipline play a certain role. First and last, however, it is the matter of instruction: Instruction by the pastor in different congregational situations, and instruction to the future pastor in seminaries. The seminary instruction ought to include confessional teaching as well as teachings concerning the doctrine and practice of Private Confession. In this way the pastor's confessional position as well as his knowledge of Private Confession would be strengthened. This in turn will increase the effectiveness of his instruction in the congregation, and possibly stimulate the desire for the pastor to personally practice Private Confession. Instruction does take place in contemporary congregational life and theological training, but without a doubt it can certainly be increased. The result would be a more frequent use of Private Confession in the care of souls.

B. Implications for the Future.

Having stated that instruction is crucial for any revival of Private Confession, one may ask how instruction should be given. Within the congregational situations, it seems apparent that instruction must largely be a service of information. The parishioners usually have little knowledge about Private Confession, and furthermore, in most cases, they do not know that Private Confession is a precious gift given to the Church to help man through periods of religious difficulties. Without frequent teaching in Sunday School, confirmation classes, sermons, adult groups, and on other occasions, the Church cannot expect her members to benefit from a means which is often indispensible.

The teaching about Private Confession will have practical results only insofar as the pastor is determined to utilize it in pastoral care, i.e., the extent to which the pastor appreciates Private Confession and has knowledge about it. This knowledge answers not only the "why," but also the "how." He must know the doctrine and theory of Private Confession, and he must know how to conduct it. The pastor may learn much by personal studies and experience, but one may safely assume that the foundation is laid on the seminary level. Consequently an effective revival of Private Confession will take place only if the subject is adequately stressed during seminary training.

If we maintain that instruction of and adherence to the confessional writings are important, theory and practice of

Private Confession must be taught. This teaching can be related somewhat to such subjects as church history, doctrines of the Lutheran Church, Liturgics, and Christian education, but it belongs mainly to the field of pastoral theology, which should also include the doctrinal and church historical aspects. However, Private Confession is a pastoral means in the care of souls. Thus there is another aspect of Private Confession no less theological than doctrine and church history, namely the pastoral psychological aspect.

According to Lutheran view, pastoral counseling and Private Confession are interrelated, the one a part of the other. One man comes to another for help. Between these two persons a relationship is created. It is based on the Word of God; nevertheless all kinds of psychological factors enter into the relationship. Within the framework of Private Confession, the confessee may have far different motives than those expressed by his confession; he may have expectations basically opposing what the pastor can offer; he may later resent the pastor because he knows "too much" about him; he may transfer to the pastor positive or negative feelings from others or himself; he may manifest other reactions about which the pastor needs more knowledge. Much has been done in the field of counseling. In Private Confession there are problems involved which go beyond those of counseling; first because Private Confession is limited to confession of sins, and second because Private Confession also includes a declared absolution given on behalf of God. In the unique setting of Private Confession much work and research is yet to be done. The challenge must be met if the Church is to utilize Private Confession effectively, one of the best means given for pastoral care.

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APPENDIX I

HYPOTHESES AND VARIABLES FOR LUTHERAN PASTORS' SURVEY.

Hypothesis:

The degree to which Private Confession is practiced in American Lutheranism is related to denominational, congregational, and ministerial factors.

Sub-hypotheses:

I. Denominational factors.
    1. Denominational affiliation.

II. Congregational factors.
    1. The congregation's location and size.
    2. The congregation's degree of assimilation into American culture.
    3. Forms of worship services used by the congregation.
    4. Instruction about Private Confession in different congregational situations.

III. Ministerial factors.
    1. The pastor's background.
    2. The pastor's education.
    3. The pastor's theological position.
    4. The pastor's confessional experience.
    5. The pastor's role definition.
    6. The pastor's self-evaluation about Private Confession.
    7. The pastor's evaluation of instruction in different congregational situations.
    8. The pastor's evaluation of situations for hearing of Private Confession.
    9. The pastor's attitude toward psychology.

Dependent Variable:

The extent to which Private Confession is practiced in American Lutheranism.

Control Variable:

The extent to which other forms of confession are practiced.

APPENDIX I (Cont.)

Independent Variables:

1. Denominational affiliation.
2. The congregation's location and size.
3. The congregation's degree of assimilation into American culture.
4. Forms of worship services used by the congregation.
5. Instruction about Private Confession in different congregational situations.
6. The pastor's background.
7. The pastor's education.
8. The pastor's theological position.
9. The pastor's professional experience.
10. The pastor's role definition.
11. The pastor's self-evaluation about Private Confession.
12. The pastor's evaluation of instruction about Private Confession in different congregational situations.
13. The pastor's evaluation of situations for hearing of Private Confession.
14. The pastor's own practice of Private Confession.
15. The pastor's attitude toward psychology.

APPENDIX II

VARIABLES, AND QUESTIONS DERIVED FROM THEM IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE (Appendix III).

Dependent Variable:

The extent to which Private Confession is practiced in American Lutheranism: Qu. 4, 5, 6, 7.

- a. Practice of Private Confession as a whole: Qu. 4.
- b. Private Confession in connection with Communion of the Sick: Qu. 5.
- c. Private Confession in connection with Announcement for Holy Communion: Qu. 6.
- d. Private Confession as a special pastoral act: Qu. 7.

Control Variable:

The extent to which other forms of confession are practiced: Qu. 1, 2, 3, 16.

- a. Frequency of practice of Public Confession: Qu. 1.
- b. Frequency of practice of an individual's confession of sins in public: Qu. 2.
- c. Frequency of individuals' confession of sins in a counseling situation: Qu. 3.
- d. Order of importance: Qu. 16.

Independent Variables:

1. Denominational affiliation: Qu. 48.

2. The congregation's location and size: Qu. 45, 46, 47.
    - a. State: Qu. 45.
    - b. Rural/urban/town/city location: Qu. 47.
    - c. Size: Qu. 46.

3. The congregation's degree of assimilation to American culture: Qu. 44, 49, 50, 51, 52.
    - a. Age of congregation: Qu. 44.
    - b. Ethnic background: Qu. 49.
    - c. Natives: Qu. 50.
    - d. Language practice: Qu. 51-52.

4. Forms of worship services used by the congregation: Qu. 8, 9.
    - a. Frequency of Holy Communion services: Qu. 8.
    - b. Frequency of informal (music) services: Qu. 9.

APPENDIX II (Cont.)

5. Instruction about Private Confession in different congregational situations: Qu. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.
    a. In sermons: Qu. 10.
    b. In Sunday School: Qu. 11.
    c. In confirmation classes: Qu. 12.
    d. In adult study groups: Qu. 13.
    e. To teachers: Qu. 14.

6. The pastor's background: Qu. 31, 32, 33, 34, 35.
    a. Parentage: Qu. 31-32.
    b. Country of birth and upbringing: Qu. 33-34.
    c. Type of community reared: Qu. 35.

7. The pastor's education: Qu. 38, 39, 40, 41.
    a. Place of seminary training: Qu. 38.
    b. Confessional position of the seminary: Qu. 40.
    c. Seminary instruction on confession and absolution: Qu. 39.
    d. Practice of confession and absolution in required pastoral care training: Qu. 41.

8. The pastor's theological position: Qu. 21.

9. The pastor's professional experience: Qu. 36, 37.
    a. His age: Qu. 37.
    b. His year of ordination: Qu. 36.

10. The pastor's role definition: Qu. 23.

11. The pastor's self-evaluation about Private Confession: Qu. 42, 22, 17.
    a. Knowledge: Qu. 42.
    b. Confessional view: Qu. 22.
    c. Appreciation of Private Confession: Qu. 17.

12. The pastor's evaluation of instruction about Private Confession in different congregational situations: Qu. 18.

13. The pastor's evaluation of situations for hearing of Private Confession: Qu. 19, 20, 24.
    a. Where to hear: Qu. 19.
    b. How to conduct: Qu. 20.
    c. Feeling of resentment: Qu. 24.

14. The pastor's own practice of Private Confession: Qu. 15.

15. The pastor's attitude toward psychology: Qu. 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 43.
    a. How favorable toward use: Qu. 25.
    b. Opinion about psychological studies: Qu. 26-30.
    c. Clinical pastoral training: Qu. 43.

APPENDIX III

QUESTIONNAIRE ABOUT LUTHERAN PASTORS' OPINION AND PRACTICE OF CONFESSION

This is a questionnaire seeking your opinion and practice of private confession and related forms of confession, such as:

a) Public confession - confession of sins by the whole congregation in connection with a service, followed by the minister's declared absolution.

b) An individual's Public Confession - confession of sins by a member before the entire congregation or a portion of it.

c) Confession of sins to God alone.

d) Confession of sins by a person to another person he has offended.

e) An individual's confession of sins while being counseled without formal absolution.

f) Private Confession - confession of sins by one man to another (usually the pastor) followed by the other's declared absolution.

This is strictly a CONFIDENTIAL questionnaire.

I. PRACTICE

1. How often have you heard public confession during the last year?

_____ times

2. How often have you heard an individual's public confession during the last year?

_____ times

3. How often have you heard an individual's confession of sins while being counseled during the last year?

_____ times

4. How often have you heard private confession during the last year?

_____ times

5. How many of the private confessions mentioned above (in 4) took place in connection with "Communion of the Sick?"

_____ times

APPENDIX III (Cont.)

6. How many of the private confessions mentioned above (in 4) took place in connection with registration or announcement for a Holy Communion Service?

_____ times

7. How many of the private confessions mentioned above (in 4) were not followed by Holy Communion, either private or in public?

_____ times

8. How often did you observe Holy Communion in public worship services during the year?

_____ times

9. How often did you have informal services (music services, "free" services, etc.,) in your church during the last year?

_____ times

10. How often have you had private confession as a topic in your sermons during the last year? (circle one)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 or more times

11. How often have you given instruction about private confession in Sunday school during the last year (circle one)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 or more times

12. How often have you given instruction about private confession in your confirmation classes during the last year? (circle one)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 or more times

13. How often have you given instruction about private confession in adult Bible classes, study groups, etc., during the last year? (circle one)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 or more times

14. How often have you given instruction about private confession to people teaching in your congregation during the last year? (circle one)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 or more times

APPENDIX III (Cont.)

15. How often did you use private confession yourself (for example to another pastor) during the last year? (circle one)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 or more times

II. OPINION

16. Please rate the forms of confession according to the importance you attach to the six commonly known forms. (Refer to definitions on page 1. Place the number 1 in front of the most important one, the number 2 in front of the next, etc.)

_____Public confession
_____An individual's public confession
_____Confession of sins to God alone
_____Confession of sins by one person to another person he has offended
_____An individual's confession of sins while being counseled without formal absolution
_____Private confession

17. What is your opinion of the following statement? "Private confession ought to be practiced much more frequently than is the case at the present time." (check one)

_____strongly agree
_____agree
_____disagree
_____strongly disagree
_____no opinion

18. On the basis of your experience as a pastor, please rate the following methods according to their importance in increasing your congregation's knowledge and practice of private confession. (Place the number 1 in front of the most important one, the number 2 in front of the next one, etc.)

_____preaching from the pulpit
_____teaching in Sunday school
_____confirmation instruction
_____instruction of adult classes
_____scheduled time for hearing of private confession and counseling
_____other methods (specify):____________________________

____

APPENDIX III (Cont.)

19. Where do you prefer to hear private confession from members of your congregation? (Place the number 1 in front of the one you most prefer, the number 2 in front of the next, etc.)

_____the church
_____the sacristy
_____the chapel
_____your office
_____your home
_____the home of the parishioner
_____ elsewhere (specify): ____________________________

____

20. What methods do you prefer to follow when you hear private confession? (check one)

_____merely listening with few or no comments
_____mostly listening, but asking questions to help the person to a better understanding of his problems
_____listening and asking questions, but also giving advice on the problems
_____listening and as a pastor telling the person what to do on the basis of your experience and knowledge
_____listening and ordering the person as to what to do based upon the Bible and Lutheran doctrines

21. Just how would you generally classify your theological position? (check one)

_____fundamentalist
_____conservative
_____neo-orthodox
_____liberal
_____other (specify): ______________________________

22. To what extent do you regard the confessional books (the Book of Concord or those parts of it that are accepted as confessional by your church body) as a norm or standard for your ministry? (check one)

_____very much
_____much
_____not very much
_____not at all

APPENDIX III (Cont.)

23. What do you regard as the most important function in your ministry, that of priest, preacher, teacher, counselor, or administrator? (check one)

_____priest
_____preacher
_____teacher
_____counselor
_____administrator

24. Do you feel that persons who have confessed their sins to you later resent the fact that you know "too much" about them? (check one)

_____nobody does
_____a very few do
_____some do
_____many do

25. To what degree do you favor using the teachings of psychology in the conducting of private confession? (check one)

_____very much
_____much
_____not very much
_____not at all

26. What is your opinion of the following statement:
"The pastor should study psychology and adopt in his work any ideas that are new." (check one)

_____strongly agree
_____agree
_____disagree
_____strongly disagree
_____no opinion

27. What is your opinion of the following statement?
"The pastor should study psychology and adopt those methods which are useful in his work." (check one)

_____strongly agree
_____agree
_____disagree
_____strongly disagree
_____no opinion

APPENDIX III (Cont.)

28. What is your opinion of the following statement? "The pastor should study psychology but accept only those ideas which agree with the Bible and the doctrines of the church." (check one)

_____strongly agree
_____agree
_____disagree
_____strongly disagree
_____no opinion

29. What is your opinion of the following statement? "The pastor should study psychology so that he can be a well informed person." (check one)

_____strongly agree
_____agree
_____disagree
_____strongly disagree
_____no opinion

30. What is your opinion of the following statement? "The pastor should study psychology so that he can criticize its non-Christian ideas." (check one)

_____strongly agree
_____agree
_____disagree
_____strongly disagree
_____no opinion

31. In what country (if U.S., so state) was your father born? _____________________________

32. In what country (if U.S., so state was your mother born? _____________________________

33. In what country (if U.S., so state) were you born? _____________________________

34. In what country (if U.S., so state did you spend most of your youth? _____________________________

35. In what type of community were you reared? (check one or more)

_____rural (farming area or town of less than 2,500 people)
_____town (population 2,500 to 50,000)
_____city (more than 50,000 people)
_____suburb of a city

APPENDIX III (Cont.)

36. In what year were you ordained? __________

37. Check the age group to which you belong:

_____less than 30 years
_____30-39 years
_____40-49 years
_____50-59 years
_____60 years or more

38. Name the seminary or university where you received your theological training.

____

(Location) ____

39. To what extent were confession and absolution included in your seminary training? (check one)

_____very much
_____much
_____not very much
_____not at all

40. To what extent did your seminary teachers regard the confessional books (the Book of Concord or those parts of it that are accepted as confessional by your denomination) as a norm or standard for the ministry? (check one)

_____very much
_____much
_____not very much
_____not at all

41. How important was the practice of confession and absolution in the required pastoral care training during your seminary years? (check one)

_____very important
_____important
_____somewhat important
_____not very important
_____not at all important

42. How do you rate your own knowledge about private confession?

_____excellent
_____very good
_____good
_____fair
_____poor
_____none at all

APPENDIX III (Cont.)

43. How much supervised work have you had in a pastoral clinical training program in a hospital or other institution? (check one)

_____none
_____one term
_____two terms
_____more than two terms

IV. CONGREGATION

44. When was your congregation(s) organized? (year)__________

45. Location of the congregation(s): ____________________
(state)

46. How many confirmed members? __________

47. How would you describe the community (or communities) in which your congregation(s) is (are) located? (check one or more)

_____rural (farming area or town of less than 2,500 people)
_____town (population 2,500 to 50,000)
_____city (more than 50.000 people)
_____suburb of a city

48. What is the synodical (denominational) affiliation of your congregation? (check one)

A. The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of N. A.
_____The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod
_____The Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (Slovak)
_____Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Church
_____Evangelical Lutheran Synod (Norwegian)

B. National Lutheran Council
_____The American Lutheran Church
_____American Evangelical Lutheran Church) From 1962
_____Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church) on these
_____Suomi Synod (Finnish Ev. Luth. Church) four will be
_____United Lutheran Church in America) the Lutheran
_____Lutheran Free Church Church in
America

APPENDIX III (Cont.)

C. Other Lutheran Bodies

_____Church of Lutheran Brethren in America
_____Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (Eielsen Synod)
_____Finnish Apostolic Lutheran Church of America
_____National Evangelical Lutheran Church
_____The Protestant Conference
_____Other

49. What is the nationality or ethnic background of the members of your congregation(s)? (check one or more)

_____German
_____Swedish
_____Danish
_____Norwegian
_____Finnish

Others (specify):______________
____
____

If a majority (50% or more) belongs to one nationality group, draw a circle around it.

50. What portion of your congregation was born in a country other than the United States?

_____per cent

51. In what language (or languages) are the services in your congregation(s) conducted?

____
____

52. If a language other than English is used, how often are services in that language conducted? (for example: every week, once a month, etc.)

____

THANK YOU

APPENDIX IV

OFFICIAL LETTER FROM THE NATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL, ENCLOSED WITH QUESTIONNAIRE

(Official Letterhead)

July 17, 1961

Dear Pastor:

The enclosed questionnaire from Pastor Knut Enger is deserving of your serious and prompt attention. Pastor Enger, who is an ordained pastor in the Church of Norway, is a candidate for the Th.D. degree at Princeton Theological Seminary. He has taken as his dissertation subject, "The Private Confession in the Lutheran Church."

It is the opinion of our staff that the information gathered by Pastor Enger in this research project will be a useful and helpful resource for our Lutheran Church toward a better understanding of the place and significance of private confession in Lutheran practice. We are, therefore, happy to recommend your full co-operation.

Sincerely,

(sign)

Robert W. Long
Executive Secretary
Division of American Missions

APPENDIX V

OFFICIAL LETTER FROM THE LUTHERAN CHURCH - MISSOURI SYNOD, ENCLOSED WITH QUESTIONNAIRE

(Official Letterhead)

June 8, 1961

Dear Pastor:

The Rev. Knut Enger, who is mailing you the enclosures, is a Lutheran pastor from Oslo, Norway, now engaged in postgraduate studies at Princeton University.

His scientific study of Confession and Absolution in the Lutheran churches of America is under the direction of Dr. Samuel Blizzard. Several years ago I was privileged to participate in a Blizzard-directed study of the administrative duties of the modern ministry. The "findings" as shared with me proved both interesting and instructive. I am confident that you will have the same experience through your participation in this survey.

Why has your name been selected? Because it appears in the roster of Missouri Synod pastors in the LUTHERAN ANNUAL. A total of 300 Missouri Synod names has been selected for this questionaire in a completely unbiased manner. You are privileged to be one of that number.

Because I should like for you to be helpful to my friend, Pastor Enger, and because I believe his "findings" will be beneficial for you, I plead your cooperation in this project.

Cordially yours,

(sign)

Norman Temme
Assistant to Dr. Oswald C. J. Hoffmann,
Director of Public Relations.

APPENDIX VI

LETTER TO PASTORS AFFILIATED WITH THE WISCONSIN SYNOD, ENCLOSED WITH QUESTIONNAIRE

LUTHERAN PASTORS' SURVEY

Neiswanger Building
The Menninger Foundation.
Box 829
Topeka, Kansas

July 24, 1961

Dear Pastor:

This project has, of course, been presented to different Lutheran church bodies before mailing was done. By now it is sponsored and/or recommended by The National Lutheran Council and The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod.

June 3rd a letter was sent to Wisconsin Synod concerning the project. In his answer of June 22nd, the President is writing:

> "Dear Pastor Enger:
> Pastor Theodore Sauer has forwarded your letter of June 3 to me. In it you ask whether we would have any objections to your mailing the questionnaire concerning the present status of private confession to some of our parish-pastors.
> Let me assure you that we have no objections to such an inquiry. ....
> I can well understand your interest in this question;
> Undoubtedly the project will prove to be rewarding study.
> Sincerely yours
> Oscar J. Naumann."

In hoping that you will find time to answer the questionnaire, I am

sincerely yours

(sign)

Knut Enger

APPENDIX VII

LETTER TO ALL PASTORS, ENCLOSED WITH QUESTIONNAIRE.

LUTHERAN PASTOR'S SURVEY

Neiswanger Building
The Menninger Foundation
Topeka, Kansas

July 17, 1961

Dear Pastor:

You have been selected as one of a group of Lutheran pastors to participate in a research study on the Private Confession.

Confession and Absolution have had a wide use in Lutheran churches in the United States and elsewhere. Among the forms of confession, Private Confession, which is a man's confession of sins to another man followed by that man's declared absolution, is an important part of our heritage. Unfortunately, very little information is available about its present use and value. You can help rediscover its value and place in our Lutheran churches.

This project is being conducted in cooperation with the National Lutheran Council and most Lutheran church bodies not affiliated with the NLC. You will render a valuable service to our Lutheran churches by participating in the project.

The enclosed questionnaire has been carefully prepared to secure information about your practice and opinion as well as that of other pastors with regard to Private Confession. When you have completed it, please return it in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope.

The opinions you give will be held strictly confidential.

In gratitude for your participation we will furnish you with a summary of the report when it is completed.

Sincerely yours,

(sign)

Knut Enger

APPENDIX VIII

FOLLOW-UP LETTER TO PASTORS,

ENCLOSED WITH ANOTHER COPY OF QUESTIONNAIRE.

LUTHERAN PASTORS' SURVEY

Neiswanger Building
The Menninger Foundation
Box 829
Topeka, Kansas

Aug. 20, 1961

Dear Pastor:

A few weeks ago you received a questionnaire concerning your practice and opinion of confession.

To date a large group of Lutheran pastors have expressed their interest in this survey because they believe it will furnish valuable information about the confession.

If you have already returned the questionnaire to us, we want to thank you for your cooperation and help.

If you have not as yet returned it, we hope you soon will find time to consider the questionnaire and mail it to us.

Sincerely yours,

(sign)

Knut Enger

APPENDIX IX

THE APOSTOLIC LUTHERAN CHURCH (THE LAESTADIANS).

A. General Remarks.

The Laestadians were described briefly in Chapter IV (pp. 163-166). There we noted (p. 166): "The Laestadians have never associated much with other Lutherans, and there are seemingly certain difficulties in establishing contact with them. However, one may assume that no Lutheran bodies at the present time use Private Confession as much as these do."

In the late fall of 1961 contact was made with the largest Laestadian group, The Apostolic Lutheran Church.[1] The questionnaire was mailed to the twenty-five ordained pastors working in the United States; answers were obtained from thirteen. As for practice of Private Confession, this Lutheran body certainly confirmed the assumption mentioned above. We will present some of the means, in parenthesis adding the means for other Lutheran churches as found in Part III.

B. Practice of Private Confession.

From the answers given to questions 4, 5, 6, 7, and 15 in the questionnaire (Appendix III), these means resulted:

1.	Annual frequency of Private Confession as a whole	: 143.9	(25.8)
2.	Annual frequency of Private Confession in connection with Communion of the Sick	: 20.3	(21.1)

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[1] The letter was sent by The Reverend W. A. Karvonen, Laurium, Michigan, who kindly permitted the writer to mail the questionnaire to his fellow pastors.

APPENDIX IX (Cont.)

3. Annual frequency of Private Confession in connection with announcement for Holy Communion : 71.4 (2.5)
4. Annual frequency of Private Confession as a special pastoral act : 52.2 (2.6)
5. Annual frequency of the Pastor's own use of Private Confession : 6.0 (0.7)

The mean for The Apostolic Lutheran Church and that of the other Lutheran bodies are almost equal for the practice of Private Confession in connection with Communion of the Sick. Between the other means, however, there is a striking difference. Assuming that the practice of Private Confession as preparation for Holy Communion and as a special pastoral act expresses a concern for the importance of Private Confession, the means are 123.6 for the Laestadians, and 5.1 for other Lutheran pastors. This shows pointedly that on the average the Laestadian pastors, conduct Private Confession in pastoral care almost 125 times a year. The results also state that the Laestadian pastors themselves frequently use Private Confession.

C. Instruction of Private Confession in Different Congregational Situations.

In our previous discussion, instruction of Private Confession was found to have great statistical significance.[1] Listed below are the means for instruction in the five congregational situations requested in questions 10, 11, 12, 13, and

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[1] Cf. *supra*, pp. 287-300.

APPENDIX IX (Cont.)

14 (Appendix III).

1. Annual frequency of Private Confession as a topic in sermons : 8.7 (1.3)
2. Annual frequency of instruction of Private Confession in Sunday School : 5.9 (0.7)
3. Annual frequency of instruction of Private Confession in confirmation classes : 5.2 (3.2)
4. Annual frequency of instruction of Private Confession in adult classes : 6.7 (2.0)
5. Annual frequency of instruction of Private Confession to teachers in the congregation : 2.6 (0.9)

Apparently the high frequency of practice of Private Confession in The Apostolic Lutheran Church is related to the frequency of instruction.[1] In any case the means stated are to be interpreted as a deep concern for the necessity and value of Private Confession.

D. Opinion of Private Confession.

All pastors were asked to rate the importance they attached to the six commonly known forms of confessions

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[1] The means are probably somewhat higher than presented because the pastors were offered the opportunity only of circling the numbers 0 to 10 as expression for frequency. As for sermons, nine of the pastors circled "10 or more"; five circled "10 or more" for instruction of Private Confession in Sunday School; three pastors circled "10 or more" for frequency of instruction in confirmation classes; six circled "10 or more" for adult classes; and two pastors circled "10 or more" for instruction about Private Confession to teachers. For the analysis, all these frequencies are regarded as 10.

(Qu. 16 in the Questionnaire). As for the rating of Private Confession, we found that the mean for Lutheran pastors as a whole was 3.5[1] ranking fourth among the six forms. Nine of the thirteen Laestadian pastors rated Private Confession first in importance; the other four rated it second; the mean being 1.3. This finding again indicates the importance this group gives to Private Confession. Eleven of the pastors also "strongly agreed" that Private Confession should be practiced more frequently than it is at the present time; the other two pastors "agreed" to the statement (Qu. 17 in the Questionnaire).

E. The Other Forms of Confession.

The last items presented will show what other forms of confession The Apostolic Lutheran Church practices, referring to questions 1, 2, and 3 in the Questionnaire.

1. Annual frequency of Public Confession : 0.1 (-)
2. An individual's confession of sins in the entire congregation or a portion of it : 7.0 (0.7)
3. Confession of sins in a counseling situation : 9.6 (13.1)

The discussion on Public or General Confession was omitted in Part III because of a bias in understanding it.[2] However, the mean for all other Lutheran pastors was almost 50, indicating

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[1] Cf. supra, p.342.

[2] Cf. supra, p. 283, note 2.

APPENDIX IX (Cont.)

that frequency of Public Confession is about the same as frequency of services during a year. According to our sample, The Apostolic Lutheran Church, except for one pastor, does not practice Public Confession. On the other hand, this church body uses the old form of confession, where the individual confesses before the entire congregation. This is considered as part of church discipline. Finally it should be mentioned that pastoral counseling without declaration of absolution is used less by The Apostolic Church than by other Lutheran churches.

Thus the findings have confirmed our theory that no Lutheran church body uses Private Confession as much as the Laestadians do. This fact is probably due to the importance given it in their teachings. The practice of Private Confession is not considered compulsory, but on the other hand is a natural part of a Laestadian's life.

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